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CUSTOMS AND INSTITUTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE SINHALESE IN THE KANDYAN PERIOD

by

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to examine the customs and institutions connected with the domestic life of the Sinhalese in the Kandyan period. Chapter I mainly treats of the circumstances under which the Kingdom of Kandy was founded and rose into prominence in course of time, giving rise to a distinct period in the history of Ceylon. This is followed by an analysis of the sources pertaining to our subject. Chapter II is devoted to a study of Sinhalese social structure. Caste was the basis of the Sinhalese social order; this chapter examines the extent to which the interrelations between the castes were governed by rules of conduct laid down by tradition. It also attempts to show that, although rules and restrictions governing such factors as marriage, commensality and occupation tended to insulate castes from each other, there was a considerable degree of inter-caste cooperation in the spheres of social and economic activities. This feature was especially manifest during domestic ceremonial occasions. The commencement of each successive stage in the life of a Sinhalese was marked by a series of ceremonies. Chapter III deals with all such ceremonies a person had to undergo before he thought of marriage. Since marriage was considered to be the most important turning-point

in the life of an individual, the whole of Chapter IV is devoted to an examination of the various complex problems connected with it. Chapter V is concerned with another critical juncture of an individual's life namely, illness. Although the Sinhalese recognized that most diseases were due to natural causes and were amenable to ordinary remedies, those diseases which could not be rightly diagnosed were often attributed to supernatural causes. Hence this chapter discusses not only the function of the physician who relied upon the medical substances credited with possessing curative possibilities but also the function of the exorcist who resorted to magic ritual in combating disease. Chapter VI deals with the subject of death and its attendant ceremonies after discussing the general attitude of society towards old people. This chapter stresses the fact that, although Buddhist monks usually did not play any significant part in Sinhalese ceremonials, which were purely domestic and private in character, they had a definite part to play in the great crisis of death. The conclusion takes a general review of the whole subject and brings out the main results of our investigation.

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Contents

Chapter I

Introduction and Sources

The present study is an attempt made to examine the customs and institutions connected with the domestic life of the Sinhalese as they existed in the Kandyan period. The Kandyan period may be taken to extend from the ascent of Vimaladharma Sūrya I to the throne of Kandy in 1592, to the deposition of Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha by the British in 1815. It would be appropriate here to note the circumstances under which the kingdom of Kandy rose into prominence giving rise to a distinct epoch in the history of Ceylon.

In the long stretch of centuries over which the Sinhalese civilization flourished in the Rajaraṭa or North-Central quarter of Ceylon, the danger of South Indian invasions was intermittent. South Indian adventurers and emperors at various times succeeded in gaining control over some portions of the island. Thus in 1017 the Cōḷas conquered Anurādhapura which had remained the capital of Ceylon for about twelve centuries. The Cōḷas held sway over Rajaraṭa for more than half a century until they were

ousted by Vijayabāhu I in 1070.[1] The Cōḷas had removed the seat of government from Anurādhapura to Polonnaruva or Pulatthinagara,[2] and as a result the former fell into decay. Hence Vijayabāhu found it politic to retain Polonnaruva as his capital.

The death of Vijayabāhu was followed by a war of succession and in a short time the political unity brought about by that king vanished. A tense political atmosphere prevailed until Parakrāmabāhu I (A.D. 1153-1186) rose to prominence making himself master of the whole of Ceylon.[3] Towards the end of the twelfth century, however, anarchy and confusion once again prevailed save for a few intervals. Sinhalese leaders were at variance among themselves and were not in a position to present a common front to successive South Indian invasions which culminated in the arrival of Māgha from Kalinga who seized the Sinhalese throne in 1215.[4] Māgha (A.D. 1215-1236) adopted a policy of repression and his reign is

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1. See History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Part II, p. 427.

2. Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, p. 188.

3. Ibid, pp. 225 ff.

4. History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Part II, p. 525; H.W. Codrington, A Short History of Ceylon, p. 67; Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, pp. 132 ff.

often termed a reign of terror.[1] Māgha's invasion stimulated all the forces of disintegration which had been at work since the death of Parākramabāhu. Eventually the Sinhalese abandoned the ancient centres of civilization such as Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva and gradually drifted to the south-west. For strategic and other reasons the capital was successively shifted to Dambadeniya, Yāpahuva, Kurunāgala, Gampola and Kōṭṭe.[2]

By the time the Portuguese came to Ceylon early in the sixteenth century the Sinhalese capital was at Kōṭṭe. There were two other kingdoms, however, whose rulers owed a submission that was little more than nominal to the ruler of of Kōṭṭe. These were Jaffna and Kandy.[3]

The Tamil kingdom of Jaffna in the north appears to have existed since the thirteenth century.[4] Although Parākramabāhu VI (A.D. 1412-1467) of Kōṭṭe brought it under his sway, disturbed political conditions that followed his death enabled the kingdom of Jaffna to

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1. Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, p. 132 ff.; Rājāvaliya, p. 69.; Suḷurājāvaliya, p. 24.
2. See History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 613 ff.
3. See S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 1.
4. Ibid, p. 2.

reassert its independence. However, the independence of the Tamils came to an end in 1619 when the kingdom of Jaffna was conquered by the Portuguese.[1]

The early history of the kingdom of Kandy which was destined to play an important part in the history of Ceylon towards the end of the sixteenth century, is for the most part uncertain. In the period during which the Sinhalese civilization flourished in Rajaraṭa and Rōhaṇa, the central highlands which later formed the nucleus of the Kandyan kingdom were called Malayaraṭa. This was the most inaccessible part of the island. The Cūlavaṃsa refers to Malayadēsa as a region 'which was difficult to penetrate owing to the inaccessibility of the many mountains and on account of the danger from wild animals, shut off from intercourse with other men, passable only on footpaths, offering all kinds of perils and dangerous by reason of deep waters...'[2]

Being so strongly protected by nature, Malayaraṭa was difficult for any ruler to be brought under effective sway. Thus, through the early centuries this sheltered

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1. H.W. Codrington, A Short History of Ceylon, pp. 111, 112.; See also S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 94.

2. Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, p. 287.

region remained the refuge of fugitives.[1]

From time to time the strategic importance of the Malayaraṭa seems to have attracted the attention of Sinhalese rulers. Kings such as Vijayabāhu I and Parākramabāhu I who aimed at bringing the whole of Ceylon under their control turned their attention towards Malayaraṭa first and obtained a secure footing there, before proceeding to Rajaraṭa.[2] This region rose into prominence by the middle of the fourteenth century when a Sinhalese kingdom was founded at Gampola.

The first king to rule from Gampola was Bhuvanaikabāhu IV (A.D. 1341-1351).[3] There is no doubt that the successors of Bhuvanaikabāhu acknowledged the supremacy of Parākramabāhu VI of Kōṭṭe, who in the last part of his reign exercised complete dominion over Ceylon.[4] After the death of the latter, however, chaos and confusion followed and a prince of the central highlands took advantage of it to declare his independence and to proclaim himself as king under the title Sēnāsammata

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1. See Mahāvaṃsa, pp. 164, 259, 260, 268.; Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, pp. 52, 77, 80, 139.

2. See Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, pp. 198, 287.

3. Nikāya sangrahaya, p. 90.; See also History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Part II, p. 636.

4. See Rājāvaliya, pp. 75 ff.

Vikramabāhu. This king is considered to be the founder of the kingdom of Kandy,[1] which from the latter part of the sixteenth century to 1815, was to stand out as the single Sinhalese power remaining in the country.

The traditional kingdom of Kandy included five raṭas or 'countries' namely, Uḍunuvara, Yaṭinuvara, Dumbara, Hārispattuva and Hēvāhäṭa.[2] Hence it came to be known as Kanda uḍa pas raṭa, literally, the five countries on the hill.[3]

Taking advantage of the disturbed political conditions in Kōṭṭe, the Kandyan kings gradually expanded their kingdom; and towards the middle of the sixteenth century it comprised not only the whole of central highlands but also some far away principalities such as Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Vellassa, Yāla and Pānama.[4] However, the distant frontiers of the Kandyan kingdom constantly fluctuated in accordance with the military power of the reigning king.

As mentioned earlier, at the time when the

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1. History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Part II, p. 680.; See also Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 241.

2. See S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 2.

3. Ibid.; See also Rājāvaliya, p. 100.; Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 3.

4. H.W. Codrington, A Short History of Ceylon, p. 26.

Portuguese came, Ceylon was politically divided into three kingdoms: Kōṭṭe, Jaffna and Kandy. This situation favoured the Portuguese who lost no time in playing an active part in Ceylonese politics. In 1521 Kōṭṭe was divided into three kingdoms,[1] bringing the number of kingdoms in Ceylon to five, namely, Kōṭṭe, Jaffna, Kandy, sītāvaka and Raigama. This caused a lamentable state of political disintegration producing disastrous consequences. The multiplicity of kingdoms led to perpetual warfare greatly benefitting the Portuguese. And in course of time all the kingdoms except Kandy passed into the hands of the Portuguese.

Although the kingdom of Kandy was in existence from the latter part of the fifteenth century, it was in the reign of Vimaladharma Sūrya I (A.D. 1592-1604) that it became a power to reckon with. On the death of Don Juan Dharmapāla in 1597 the kingdom of Kōṭṭe, together with the kingdom of Sītāvaka which had been annexed to it after the death of Rājasiṃha I, passed under Portuguese rule.[2] Kandy, being the only Sinhalese kingdom

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1. Rājāvaliya, p. 84 ff.; James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 13.

2. See S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 69.

now left in the island, came to be regarded as the last bastion of Sinhalese independence against foreign domination.[1]

Since the early years of the sixteenth century the Portuguese missionaries were working with great zeal in the maritime provinces and were successful in converting a certain number of the Sinhalese to Christianity.[2] Similarly with the rapid expansion of the Portuguese power, the maritime provinces became open to an influx of western ideas and culture. While all these changes were taking place in the territories which had come under the Portuguese rule, Sinhalese society in the Kandyan provinces remained much the same as it had been before. Hence the Kandyan kingdom soon came to be regarded as the citadel of Sinhalese culture and the symbol of Buddhism.

Naturally the Portuguese were not inclined to see a new power arising at Kandy, and were resolved to crush it at any cost. The determination of the Portuguese to put an end to the last vestige of Sinhalese

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1. Mandāram pura puvata, vv. 89 ff.; James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, pp. 23 ff.

2. See Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 384.; Sulurajavaliya, p. 32.; William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, pp. 297, 298.

power in the island led to a protracted struggle between them and Vimaladharma Sūrya. Being the only Sinhalese ruler left in the island, the latter had enough popular support. This enabled him to rally the Sinhalese under his banner and stoutly resist the onslaughts of the Portuguese who were led by such able generals as Don Jeronimo de Azevedo.[1]

Vimaladharma Sūrya died in 1604 and was succeeded by his brother Senarat (A.D. 1604-1635). The new king had been a Buddhist monk and was a peace-loving person; yet he did not intend to adopt a meek attitude towards the Portuguese. The latter were entirely bent on war. Hence the normal relationship between them was destined to be one of hostility. The Portuguese continued to make incursions into the Kandyan territory as usual and devastated much of it whenever they found an opportunity to do so.[2] Tennent observes: 'An internecine war now raged for years in Ceylon, the Portuguese in successive forays penetrating to Kandy, and even to Oovah and Saffragam, burning towns, uprooting fruit trees, driving away cattle, and making captives to be enslaved in the

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1. William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, pp. 246 ff.; See also S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, pp. 74 ff.

2. H.W. Codrington, A Short History of Ceylon, p. 110.

lowlands'.[1] However, they did not succeed in holding the areas they overran permanently under their sway. In 1630 Senarat inflicted a severe defeat on the Portuguese led by Constantine de Sa;[2] but did not follow up his victory by an immediate attempt to capture Colombo. Several assaults were made on the city some time later; but by this time the Portuguese were prepared for it and were able to hold out. Assaults continued for two months and when the Portuguese received reinforcements from Goa Senarat decided to raise the siege. Exhausted by years of almost ceaseless warfare or preparation for war, Senarat decided to make peace with the Portuguese towards the end of his reign.[3]

The reign of Senarat's son and successor Rājasiṃha II (A.D. 1635-1687) witnessed a remarkable development in Ceylonese politics. Realising that it was not in his power to expel the Portuguese from Ceylon Rājasiṃha decided to call in the assistance of the Dutch

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1. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 24.

2. H.W. Codrington, A Short History of Ceylon, p. 114. See also S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 101.

3. See S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 104.

in 1636.[1] By the middle of the century the Dutch had succeeded in ousting the Portuguese. With this event opens a new chapter in the history of the Kandyan kingdom.

The motives which brought the Dutch to Ceylon were essentially commercial. Hence they were not keen on extending their authority beyond the frontiers of the territory which they had wrested from the Portuguese. In this connexion Tennent states: 'Their career throughout the period of their dominion in the island, exhibits a marked contrast to that of the Portuguese; it was characterised by no lust for conquest, and unstained by acts of remorseless cruelty to the Singhalese'.[2] There were frequent disagreements, however, between the Dutch and the kings of Kandy and causes of friction were not wanting.[3] In fact towards the last decades of the eighteenth century there were some major clashes between the Kandyan kings and their new ally. However, at no time did the Dutch ever adopt a policy of territorial conquest.

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1. William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 265.; Rājāvaliya, p. 109.; Sulurajavaliya, p. 38. See also Cūlavamsa, Part II, pp. 236, 237.

2. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 24.; See also William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 273.

3. See P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, pp. 14 ff.; Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 287.

The peaceful policy adopted by the Dutch enabled the kings of Kandy to enjoy a comparatively long period of peace.[1] During the years of the Portuguese occupation of the maritime provinces hostilities broke out on the most flimsy pretexts and the pressure of perpetual warfare left the kings of Kandy hardly any time to turn their attention to peaceful pursuits. But the policy of live and let live of the Dutch gave them sufficient leisure to undertake religious and other national activities. The successor of Rājasiṃha II, Vimaladharma Sūrya II (1687-1706), for instance, sent envoys to the king of Arakan requesting him to send a sufficient number of duly ordained monks to Ceylon in order to restore the Higher Ordination (upasampadā) which had lapsed during the years of political disturbances.[2] The Dutch gave their co-operation to this

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1. 'Even when provocation was caused to them, as happened more than once by outrages on the part of the Sinhalese rulers, or by their bad faith, they attempted no retaliation... The Sinhalese in the dominions of the King of Kandy were therefore left unmolested, and were free to follow their own pursuits in peace'. G.P. Malalasekera, The Pāli Literature of Ceylon, p. 273.

2. Sangarajavata, vv. 51, 52.; Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, pp. 239, 240.

venture by placing a vessel at the disposal of the envoys.[1]

The reign of Vimaladharma Sūrya's son and successor Śrī Vīra Parākrama Narēndrasiṃha (A.D. 1706-1739) is comparatively uneventful; and with his death the royal line of Sinhalese kings came to an end. From early times, the Sinhalese kings followed the practice of seeking queens from royal families of South India. And when Narēndrasiṃha died childless, his queen's brother, a Nāyakkār prince, was nominated as his successor giving rise to the Nāyakkār dynasty. The new king took the title Śrī Vijaya Rājasiṃha.[2]

By this time the Nāyakkār influence at the Kandyan court was considerable. However, being fully aware of the opposition in Ceylon to Tamil rule Śrī Vijaya Rājasiṃha (A.D. 1739-1747) adopted a conciliatory policy to strengthen his position on the throne. Since the vast majority of the people whom he was called upon to rule were Buddhists, and also since the kings of Ceylon were expected to be the protectors of Buddhism, Śrī Vijaya professed himself as a champion of Buddhism.

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1. Udaraṭa vitti, pp. 159, 160.; P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, p. 28.; James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 61.

2. Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, p. 246.; Sangarajavata, v. 85.

Further, he displayed his newly acquired zeal for Buddhism by sending envoys to Siam to fetch ordained monks for the purpose of restoring the Higher Ordination (upasampadā). The first mission despatched in 1741 failed when the vessel in which it was conveyed wrecked near Pegu. A second attempt was made in 1747. The new mission succeeded in obtaining duly ordained monks from Siam. However, before they could return the news of the death of Śrī Vijaya was received and were advised not to convey the monks before ascertaining the wishes of the new king in Kandy.[1]

On the death of Śrī Vijaya, his brother-in-law ascended the throne under the title Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha. Like his predecessor, Kirti Śrī (A.D. 1747-1780) adopted Buddhism and gave proof of his religious zeal by turning his attention to religious deeds. It is evident that Kīrti Śri's predecessor, Śrī Vijaya, acquired an enthusiasm for Buddhism mainly owing to the influence of his tutor, Välivița Saranankara who had earned a name as a pious monk and an eminent scholar from the days of Śrī Vīra

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1. S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, pp. 183, 185.; Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, pp. 253, 254.; Sangarajavata, vv. 85 ff.

Parākrama Narēndrasiṃha.[1] When his pupil was elevated to the throne, Saranankara became the confidential adviser of the former. And it was under Saranankara's instance that Śrī Vijaya sent ambassadors to Siam to invite monks to restore the Higher Ordination.[2] As mentioned above, these attempts ended in failure and by this time the Order of the Saṅgha had reached its lowest ebb.[3] The repeated failures did not lessen the enthusiasm of Saranankara who was now determined to make a renewed effort with the help of his new patron. Like his predecessor, Kīrti Śri, too, listened to Saranankara with profound attention and in 1750 a fresh mission was sent to Siam. After a perilous voyage the mission returned in 1753 with a sufficient number of duly ordained monks.[4] They were received amidst great rejoicings and the ceremony of upasampadā was held in Kandy, at which Saranankara and other principal sāmaṇēras received the higher ordination.[5] Saranankara was elevated

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1. See Mandāram pura puvata, vv. 511, 512.
2. Sangharāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 13.
3. See Sangarajavata, vv. 57 ff.; Vimānavastuprakaraṇaya, p. 241.
4. S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, p. 186.
5. Sangharāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 16.; Sangarajavata, vv. 175 ff.; Vimanavastuprakaraṇaya, pp. 244, 245.; Sāsanāvatīma varnanava, p. 22.

to the position of the Saṅgharāja, the highest office amongst the Saṅgha.[1] During subsequent years Kīrti Śrī repaired a large number of religious buildings which had suffered from the ravages of time.[2] Apart from renovating old temples he built and endowed several new ones, and also had religious manuscripts copied under the supervision of competent scholars.

Thus Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha's patronage and Saranankara's enthusiasm gave a new lease of life and vigour to Buddhism. The Sinhalese literature mainly derived its spirit and vitality from Buddhism and to revive Buddhism was practically to revive Sinhalese literature. Such being the case, with the revival of Buddhism a new era dawned for letters and there was an outcrop of literature. Saranankara himself produced several works.[3] It is further noteworthy that along with the development of a literature in which the elements of religion and didacticism were prominent, interest in secular subjects also gathered a fresh momentum during this period. Kīrti Śrī's unstinted patronage drew round

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1. Mandāram pura puvata, vv. 715, 716.
2. Ibid, vv. 812 ff. See also Suḷurājāvāliya, pp. 45, 46.
3. See Saṅgharāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 32.; Sangarajavata, vv. 98-104.

him a large number of poets whose works occasionally furnish information not forthcoming from elsewhere.

Kīrti Śrī was one of the most remarkable rulers of Kandy. In fact he was by far the most eminent sovereign of his dynasty. Towards the second half of his rule, however, there was a decline in his fortunes. Even the generous and munificent patronage of Kīrti Śrī to Buddhism and Sinhalese literature did not satiate the anti-Nāyakkār faction which grew apace all these years. They hatched a plot to do away with Kīrti Śrī and place a Siamese prince on the throne.[1] The plot was foiled and the conspirators were punished; but it certainly diminished the prestige of the king.

Kīrti Śrī was next involved in a war with the Dutch which dragged on for a considerable time pressing severely upon his resources.[2] At last the king was constrained to sue for peace and the hostilities ceased by the Treaty of 1766.[3]

In 1782 Kīrti Śrī died and was succeeded by

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1. P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, p. 67.; Sasanāvatīrna varnanava, pp. 23, 24.

2. Cūlavamsa, Part II, pp. 266 ff.; Sulurājāvaliya, pp. 44, 45.; S.G. Perera, A History of Ceylon, Part I, pp. 191, 192.

3. See P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, pp. 78-80.

his brother under the name of Rājādhi Rājasiṃha. Rājādhi Rajasiṃha (A.D. 1780-1798), like his predecessor, continued the practice of protecting and encouraging religion and art and letters. He was a poet besides being a patron.[1] And his poem the Asadisa dā kava is a work of considerable merit.

In the meantime the British came into conflict with the Dutch in Ceylon. By this time the latter had entered upon a period of stress and difficulty. To make matters worse for the Dutch, the British entered into an alliance with Rājādhi Rājasiṃha. Hostilities soon began and by 1796 all the Dutch possessions in Ceylon passed into the hands of the British.[2]

During all this period the Kandyan kingdom remained independent and continued to be regarded as the citadel of Sinhalese culture and the last bastion of Sinhalese independence against foreign domination.

In 1798 Rājādhi Rājasiṃha died and one of his relatives was set on the throne by the chief Adigar, Pilimatalavvē, under the name of Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha. Pilimatalavvē was the then leader of the anti-Nāyakkār

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1. Cūlavaṃsa, Part II, p. 301.; Suḷurājāvaliya, p. 50.

2, See P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, p. 108.

faction and his ambition was to become king himself. However, at the death of Rājādhi Rājasiṃha his position was not strong enough to achieve this and he was compelled to postpone his plan. Hence he placed Śrī Vikrama on the throne with the hope of getting rid of him later.[1]

The Adigar next sought the support of the British to achieve his object. However his requests made in this connexion were rejected by Frederick North, the British Governor at the time. In the meantime some Muslims from the British territory were robbed of a consignment of arecanuts while trading in the King's territory.[2] An attempt was made by the British to secure compensation, but the king did not turn a favourable ear to this request. Thereupon North decided to invade the Kandyan Kingdom. It is commonly alleged that the Muslims were robbed at the instigation of Pilimatalavvē in order to involve the king and the British in hostilities.[3]

The British army which did not meet with much

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 312.; Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 21.

2. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, pp. 63, 64.

3. Ibid.

resistance on their march entered Kandy from two directions on the 21st of February 1803 and occupied it with ease.[1] The king had withdrawn to Hanguranketa and Kandy was totally deserted. However, the British who were isolated in the heart of the hostile country could not remain long in Kandy. Many were stricken with fever which daily thinned their numbers. Further, the dearth of supplies was pressing them heavily. Hence, when the Sinhalese began their counter-attack the British were reduced to sore straits. Despite a gallant attempt to hold out they were compelled to capitulate; after which almost all of them were put to death.[2] Śrī Vikrama followed up his victory by an attempt to take some of the British territories but his forces were soon forced to retreat.[3]

Thomas Maitland, who succeeded North as Governor of the British possessions in Ceylon devoted himself almost wholly to matters of internal administration, and for a time Śrī Vikrama was freed from the anxieties

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1. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, p. 65.

2. Ibid, pp. 67 ff.

3. Ibid, p. 100.; See also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, pp. 37, 38.; John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 315.

of warfare. However, Robert Brownrigg who succeeded Maitland in 1812, resolved to attempt the annexation of the Kandyan kingdom. Preparations for this task which had been postponed by Maitland were now resumed.

The British had been regularly informed of events in the Kandyan kingdom the condition of which was now deplorable. In 1811 Pilimatalavvē was found guilty of conspiring to assassinate the king and was put to death. He was succeeded by his nephew, Ähälepola, as first Adigar.[1] The king was suspicious of Ähälepola from the very beginning. And when in 1814 complaints as to his doings at Sabaragamuva reached the king, he was promptly summoned to Kandy. Thereupon Ähälepola stirred the people of Sabaragamuva to rise in revolt and sought shelter in British territory.[2] The king is said to have given rein to his rage by executing Ähälepola's wife and children and other close relatives. However, Śrī Vikrama was destined to enjoy no rest. The repeated acts of

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 44.; William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 320.; John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 322, 323.

2. For further particulars see John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 320 ff.

tyranny[1] which he committed offended almost everyone. Sporadic insurrections broke out from time to time. Affairs at Kandy were thus thrown into greater confusion than ever.

In the meantime some Sinhalese traders from British territory who had gone to Kandy were charged with espionage and mutilated. Some died on the spot, those who survived were sent to Colombo. Further, the king's troops who had gone in search of some rebels had entered the British territory at Sītavaka and set fire to a house there. For these acts the king was held responsible and Brownrigg who had made up his mind to annex the Kandyan kingdom declared war against him.

On their march the British troops met with no serious resistance. Bailey refers to this invasion as a 'triumphal march', and states that the 'British troops were acclaimed by the officials and nobles as liberators rather than conquerors'.[2] The king had fled

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1. Knighton states: 'Nothing could exceed the fury of the king on this second rebellion of his chief officer, and his anger was fearfully visited on the heads of all those suspected of the slightest misdemeanours. Impalements, tortures and beheading, succeeded each other in quick rotation, and scarcely had one been executed ere another was doomed to succeed him'. William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 321.

2. Sydney D. Bailey, Ceylon, p. 82.

but was captured on February 18, 1815.[1] On the 2nd of March the Convention between the British Government and the Sinhalese chiefs was signed[2] and the independence of the Kandyan kingdom was thus finally extinguished.

The Kandyan kingdom maintained an isolation from the rest of Ceylon until it was occupied by the British in 1815. The nature of the country facilitated the development of insularity. A tangle of mountains served to separate the Kandyan territory from the surrounding lowlands. Since this region receives a heavy rainfall which encourages the quick vegetative growth of plants,[3] most of its forests were covered with a dense undergrowth rendering them almost impenetrable. Moreover these forests were preserved for military reasons.[4] The people were not allowed even to gather

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 47.

2. See Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, pp. 213, 214.

3. Marshall observes: 'Vegetation is so rapid, that the boundaries cut through the forest for the survey... speedily disappear, and many proprietors, even of cultivated estates, cannot discover their own limits'. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, p. 6.

4. John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom, p. 65.

firewood in some of them. There being no road system which connected the highlands with the low lands, travelling had to be done by narrow tracks[1] which were guarded and closed by 'thorn gates' (Kadavat). Knox observes: 'This Kingdom of Conde Uda is strongly fortified by Nature. For which way soever you enter into it, you must ascend vast and high mountains, descend little or nothing. The wayes are many, but very narrow, so that but one can go abreast. The Hills are covered with Wood and great Rocks, so that 'tis scarce possible to get up any where, but onely in the paths, in all which there are gates made of Thorns, the one at the bottom, the other at the top of the Hills, and two or three men always set to watch, who are to examine all that come and go, and see what they carry, that Letters may not be conveyed, nor Prisoners or other slaves run away'.[2]

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1. In this connexion Marshall observes: 'The roads in the inland and upper country were, during the native government, chiefly narrow paths, by which men on foot might pass singly, climbing over the rocks, and penetrating through the thickets in the best way they could. Bullocks, the common beasts of burden, even with light load, were with great difficulty able to get over the precipitous parts of some of the passes. There being little or no trade in the country, roads for wheel-carriages were not required; indeed, making roads was discouraged by government'. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, p. 3.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 5.

These factors obviously made communications extremely difficult and encouraged the inhabitants of the Kandyan kingdom to remain insulated to a considerable degree against the inhabitants of the other parts of the island. This in turn brought about a division amongst the Sinhalese themselves. Those inhabiting the Kandyan territories were termed Kandyan Sinhalese (udaraṭa sinhalayo or uda rāṭiyo) while those inhabiting the maritime provinces, which were under European occupation, came to be known as the low-country Sinhalese (pāta raṭa sinhalayo, pāta rāṭiyo or pātayo). The ceaseless warfare between the Kandyan kings and the Portuguese, who had occupied many of the maritime provinces and were determined to conquer the Kandyan kingdom, naturally widened the gap between the low-country and Kandyan Sinhalese. This however, was only a division created by historical and geographical factors. The common traditions of the immemorial Sinhalese civilization, common language, and above all the integrative force of Buddhism linked the people of the Kandyan provinces with the people of the low-country despite the historical and geographical factors which tended to bring about a division amongst them. In this connexion Marshall 'who belonged to the first division of the army which was assembled for the invasion of the kingdom of Kandy' states: 'Colloquially, the inhabitants... are

sub-divided into two varieties, namely, Sinhalese and Kandyans, terms which are similar in import to Lowlanders and Highlanders. There is no specific distinction between them; they have the same origin, speak the same language, follow the same religion, and have the same habits of life'.[1]

It is true that during the years of European occupation of the maritime provinces a certain number of the Sinhalese adopted Christianity. However, the number of Christian converts was small in relation to the total population of these areas. The vast majority of the Sinhalese remained Buddhists, and among them the same customs and institutions that existed amongst their brethren in the Kandyan kingdom prevailed. Of course one cannot deny the fact that some of the Sinhalese customs were characterized by some minor regional peculiarities. For instance there appears to have been some variation in the observation of customs connected with marriage ceremonies amongst inhabitants of different parts of the island. While the people who lived in districts contiguous to Kandy considered the performance of the extensive and

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1. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants, p. 13.; See also Anthony Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, pp. 45, 46.

elaborate marriage ceremonies indispensable, the people of the North-Central province, amongst whom marriage was usually less stable, observed only a few ceremonies. Sometimes even the ritual of binding the fingers of the bride and bridegroom, which was symbolic of an indissoluble union, was omitted. In fact, it was usual to omit any ceremony that did not appear to be appropriate. Similarly, the custom of polyandry which was almost universal in the Kandyan provinces was rare in the coastal regions. It is seen however, that even in the latter this custom was never frowned upon. Further, although the belief in gods was universal in Ceylon, some gods were generally imagined as having a special locality of their own. Thus Vibhīsana, who was considered a powerful god at Kälaniya and other places in the vicinity of Colombo was less feared in the Kandyan provinces. Similarly, while cults associated with the goddess Pattini were scrupulously observed in the Kandyan areas they received less attention in the coastal regions.

In spite of these minor regional differences, the basic pattern of social life was the same amongst all sections of the Buddhist Sinhalese. Hence the scope of the present study in which we have sought to examine the customs and institutions connected with the domestic life of the Sinhalese in the Kandyan period, has not been

limited to the Kandyan kingdom, although an attempt has been made to limit it to the time when Kandy remained as the only independent Sinhalese power in Ceylon.

Attention may also be called to the fact that some of the Sinhalese customs and institutions may have changed or disappeared during the course of years from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. For instance although early writers such as Knox and Heydt state that infanticide was common in the Kandyan provinces, later writers such as Davy and Forbes believe that the Sinhalese held this practice in abhorrence. It is possible that infanticide came to be frowned on in later times, although it had been practised during an earlier age. Many customs of this nature may have disappeared in course of time while some underwent change. However, most of the customs and institutions which have been dealt with in this study seem to have been in existence during the course of last few centuries. In fact, many of them have persisted up to the present day.

So far no comprehensive study of this subject has been made. In fact the greater part of it is yet an untrodden field. There are a few works, however, which touch upon some aspects of the subject dealt with in this

study. Of these Sinhalese Literature,[1] by C.E. Godakumbura claims our attention first. Though limited to the history of Sinhalese literature, Godakumbura's work is of immense value to the student seeking to concern himself with the social life of the Sinhalese in Kandyan times, since it introduces many popular Sinhalese works of sociological interest which have been so far put aside by scholars in favour of more elegant literary works. Apart from tracing the development of Sinhalese literature Godakumbura also pays attention to the various influences which were at work during different periods of Ceylon history. This he does admirably well as he approaches the Kandyan period. Indeed literature is not a subject that can be studied in isolation; hence Godakumbura has kept in view the connexion it has with the social history of the time, and has dealt with some of the practices, cults and beliefs of the Sinhalese in passing.

E.R. Sarathchandra's valuable work, The Sinhalese Folk Play,[2] which provided for the first time a comprehensive study of Sinhalese dramatic art, also deals with some of the cults, practices and customs that were followed by the Sinhalese side by side with Buddhism. Understandably

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1. Published in 1955.

2. Published in 1953.

enough, in dealing with the folk religion Sarathchandra has concentrated 'only on those aspects of it that are of interest to the student of drama'. Nevertheless his work throws much light on many abstruse points relating to Sinhalese folk cults and also created interest in a subject that had until then received less than its due share of attention.

In his work entitled Sinhalese Social Organization[1] Ralph Pieris deals with a variety of subjects such as the royal court, administration, land tenure, legal system and marriage. This work embodies much research and is of great use to those who intend to make further research concerning social conditions during the Kandyan period.

Koṭagama Wāchissara's work, Saranankara Sangharāja Samaya[2] is devoted to a thorough examination of the religious and literary revival brought about by the joint efforts of Väliviṭa Saranankara and king Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha in mid eighteenth century. Although it was beyond the scope of this work to make a detailed examination of the social history of the Kandyan period, it touches upon some spheres of life among the Sinhalese in Kandyan

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1. Published in 1956.

2. Published in 1960.

times, occasionally providing interesting information on such subjects as religion and magic.

Apart from the works mentioned above, there are several valuable articles published in learned periodicals which touch upon some aspects of our subject. Among those are T.B. Paranatella's Sumptuary Laws and Social Etiquette of the Kandyans,[1] W.A. De Silva's The Medical Literature of the Sinhalese[2] and I. Pannatissa's Secular Education in the Pirivena Schools.[3] These articles are factual and interesting. Paranatella, however, is more concerned with facts relating to his own time than with those of the Kandyan period proper. Although Silva's article often makes reference to such matters as methods of treatment used by Sinhalese physicians in Kandyan times, by reason of its scope it necessarily avoids details and deals with them in a summary way.

Pannātissa pays more attention to the text books used in pirivena schools than to the methods of instruction used in them. These limitations, however, do not mar the value of the above mentioned articles.

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1. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1908, XXI/61, pp. 119 ff.
2. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1913, XXIII/66, pp. 34 ff.
3. Ceylon Historical Journal, 1951, Vol. I, pp. 38 ff.

Sources

The main sources which are utilised for the present study may broadly be divided into three groups: (I) Sinhalese literature and documents, (II) accounts by European writers and (III) folk-songs and folk-tales.

(I) Sinhalese literature and documents.

The Sinhalese possess a rich popular literature which abounds in material relating to different aspects of their life and culture. This is a feature which we miss in the more elegant works in which religion and didacticism are often prominent. Whatever its shortcomings from the point of view of the modern literary critic, Sinhalese popular literature is of great value to the student of social history. However, the dates of composition of most of the works which form this literature have not definitively been ascertained, and only a few of them have yet been published.

Many of the manuscripts used in the preparation of the present study belong to the Hugh Nevill Collection preserved in the British Museum Library. Hugh Nevill was one of the British civil servants who served in Ceylon from 1869 to 1886. He has been rightly described as 'one of the most outstanding English intellects ever to serve in Ceylon', and his interest in Sinhalese literature

has induced him to collect a large mass of manuscripts from different parts of the country.

Although the precise date of composition of most of the works which belong to the Hugh Nevill Collection cannot be established, there is no doubt that they belong to a period anterior to the middle of the nineteenth century. With reference to the Hugh Nevill Collection Deraniyagala rightly observes: '... the great importance of his collection of manuscripts lies in their antiquity, for poems of this nature were not produced at short notice in Nevill's day in order to supply the demands of collectors, as is the case today. They cover a range of epic, narrative, lyrical, didactic, panegyric, elegiac, ballad and popular poetry both classical and modern; and throw important light, not only on the myths and legends of the Sinhalese, when the national culture was relatively untrammeled by foreign influence, but also record a host of customs, ritual and domestic ceremonies that have completely disappeared since those days'.[1]

None can disagree with this statement. We have to bear in mind, however, that the original purpose of this literature was quite different from that of furnishing historical and sociological information.

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1. Sinhala verse (kavi), Part II, p. iii.

Hence, it does not give us a connected account of any particular custom or institution. It is also worth noting that some of these works are full of all sorts of legendary and mythical material. And it is left for the student to strip away the mythic wrappings and discover the realities behind the accounts. For even such works, when properly studied, often provide much useful information.

Thus, a cautious study of the Koṭahalu amutu,[1] Koṭahaḷu upata[2] and Koṭahaḷu dīpavanse,[3] which form a class of poems known as koṭahaḷu kavi, will enable us to reconstruct almost a complete picture of the koṭahalu mangula or the ceremony of purification held when a girl attains puberty. There is no doubt that these poems were intended to be recited by the washerwoman who was called in to perform the above-mentioned ceremony. All the poems begin with a mythical account concerning the origin of the purification ceremony and the part the washerwoman had to play in it. Thereafter they describe certain expiatory ceremonies held in the case of girls who attained maturity on inauspicious days in order to

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1. The New Puberty Ceremony.
2. The Origin of the Puberty Ceremony.
3. The History of the Puberty Ceremony.

free them from evil influences. This is followed by an account of the rites which had to be performed at the time they are restored to purity at the end of their period of uncleanness. The authors of the koṭahalu poems are very keen on giving the origin of almost every rite they describe; hence these works tend to be full of fanciful myths and impossible legends. For instance, in reference to the practice of imposing seclusion on girls at their first menses, they state that the first girl to be so secluded was princess Mādēvi, an inmate of the harem of Mahāsammata, the first king of the world. From our point of view, the fact that the koṭahalu poets treat their subject matter in a mythological way does not mar the value of their works. For it is seen that they introduce mythology only when they seek to describe the origin of a particular rite. What is important is to find out whether the rites they describe were actually performed at the ceremony of purification in Kandyan times. Evidence provided by the other sources generally agrees with the information contained in the koṭahalu poems, hence their value deserves recognition in a considerable measure. The Koṭahalu upata, Koṭahalu amutu and Koṭahalu dīpavanse go together by their subject matter and style of composition. Their dates, however, cannot be definitely known. Writing in mid nineteenth century

HughNevill states that they appear to be 'two or three centuries old'.[1] These works certainly incorporate some old materials. In addition to that, their style also confirms that they are early works.

The Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota contains a collection of verses sung at masked plays, kōlam, in order to introduce the dramatis personae to the audience. This work merely portrays some isolated situations without any connection as a whole. The value of the Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota lies in the fact that it takes us to the life of the common people by introducing a host of characters some of whom belong to the lowest strata of society. Among the characters thus introduced are the drummer, the washerman, the soldier and the Muslim tradesman. This indeed offers a contrast to many of the stereotyped descriptions of men and women to be found in classical Sinhalese literature. It is not surprising that a work like the Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota in which the note of simplicity is unmistakable, gives us an insight into the customs and manners of the common people. Nothing is known of the author of this work. Whoever he is, he may have belonged to the Kandyan period, for in his Yakkun Nattannawā and Kōlan Nattannawā John Callaway gives a translation of a large number of

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1. Sinhala Verse (kavi), Part I, p. 327.

kōlam verses taken from the Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota. Callaway's work was published in 1829. Naturally therefore, the Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota must belong to a much earlier period than that date.

The kilidōsaya is another useful work whose author has left no account of himself. This short poem consisting of fifty eight verses commences with a mythological story of the origin of the universe. This ends abruptly and is followed by an account of the demons and spirits who are supposed to visit miscarriages and other afflictions upon women. Next comes a description of the pre-natal precautionary taboos which pregnant women had to follow. This also mentions the restrictions that had to be observed by women who were considered unclean and were under a taboo (kili). There is a large number of obscure references to gods, demons, spirits, evil-eye (äsvaha), evil-mouth (kaṭavaha), evil-breath (hō vaha) and charms and spells scattered among these descriptions. The date of the composition of this work cannot be fixed with certainty. Considering the general style and language, we are inclined to assign it to the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The Upadēsa mālaya and Dänamutu mālaya are two treatises on the rules of conduct to be observed by those who want to live prudently. As their titles

suggest the works have much in common. They go together both by their subject-matter and style of composition. Many of the verses they contain embody a proverb or some other ethical saying. Further, each verse is usually complete by itself and is simple and unsophisticated. Although there is a pronounced didactic element in these poems they are certainly no mere collections of ethical sayings. Indeed they throw much light on the thoughts and life at the time of their composition and are valuable in elucidating and supplementing information from other works. They were of great use for the present work. Neither the authorship nor the dates of composition of these works are known with certainty. Alwis refers to the Dānamutu nālaya in his introduction to the Sidat sangarāva in 1852,[1] and its composition is no doubt to be referred to a much earlier period. Subject matter, style of composition and the social background of both works being the same they could not have been separated by a very wide gap of time.

The Vadankavipota and Ganadevi hälla furnish corroborative evidence in reconstructing the system of instruction in Kandyan times. The former contains an analysis of the Sinhalese alphabet and also describes the

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1. James De Alwis, Sidat sangarāva, p. lxxiii.

traditional method of the teaching the young to read and write. The ceremony at which a child was initiated into the mysteries of the alphabet was considered to be a very important one; hence the Vadankavipota gives some instructions as to how it should be performed. This work speaks highly of the value of learning and in some of its verses the element of didacticism is predominent. Even at present some of these verses are often recited in order to infuse the young with a love of learning. The Vadankavipota does not give us the name of its author. However, traditionally it has been ascribed to Attaragama Rājaguru Bandāra, a pupil of Välivita Saranankara who flourished in the eighteenth century.[1] The Ganadevi hälla is second only to the Vadankavipota as a source book for the study of the system of elementary teaching inparted in the pirivena schools. The work commences with a description of the origin of Ganēśa, the God of Wisdon. This is followed by some verses in adoration of that god. It then invokes a host of other gods who are supposed to be responsible for the intellectual attainments of a child. Towards the end of the work there is an interesting description of the conventional stages of instruction. From our point of view, this

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1. See Sinhala sāhitya vansaya, p. 180.

is the most important section of the poem. The Ganadevi hälla was used as a text-book in the pirivena schools, 'the pupil being made to commit it to memory at the thresholds of his studies, soon after he has mastered the alphabet and has read the Nampota'.[1] This poem is of unknown authorship. Traditionally it is ascribed to Attaragama Rājaguru Bandāra, who is also the author of the Vadankavipota.[2] Whatever the truth of this tradition may be, it is reasonable to conclude that the Ganadevihälla was written after the Vadankavipota since the former mentions the latter.[3]

The Janavaṃsaya is a work on the caste system of Ceylon by an anonymous author. Although the work is tainted with a profuse intermixture with all kinds of legendary matter its historical value also deserves recognition in a considerable measure. Janavaṃsaya commences with a fanciful account concerning the origin of the universe and the formation of the different caste groups. Needless to say, this account is too fabulous to be entitled to any credit. Many of the details which

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1. Catalogue of the Sinhalese Manuscripts in the British Museum, p. 104.
2. See Sinhala sāhitya vaṃsaya, p. 180.
3. Ganadevihälla, v. 37.

follow are more useful. For instance, the list of castes given in the Janavaṃsaya is helpful in reconstructing the Sinhalese caste hierarchy. The work is also valuable for the information it provides concerning various caste-linked occupations.

Then there is a class of poems apparently written to satirise some local events. Among those we have made use of are the Pädurē haṭana, Balal katāva and Nikini katāva. These poems are short and are composed without any pretensions to scholarship. The motive behind the composition of these works was by no means the production of a poem of a high order to stand the scrutiny of scholars. They were meant for popular amusement. In spite of this these poems furnish a fund of information regarding the social life of the period in which they were composed. For instance, the Pädurē haṭana which narrates an event centering round two brothers who lived in their parental house with a common wife, shows how economic pursuits such as chena-cultivation contributed to the prevalence of polyandry. The authorship as well as the date of its composition is unknown. The language of the work points to a date beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. The Balal katāva appears to have been written in order to ridicule a person who attempted to contract a marriage ignoring the caste regulations.

Caste played a significant part in limiting one's choice of partners; and this poem shows how a person who disregarded it became an object of public ridicule. In the absence of evidence it is difficult to say when this poem was composed. Apart from a few grammatical peculiarities, there is hardly any proof to induce us to attribute it to an early writer. The Nikini katāva too, narrates a simple story particularly appealing to the rural folk. The story centres round an unfaithful woman who sent her unsuspecting husband in search of nikini seeds with the hope of creating an opportunity to enjoy the company of her paramour. Although the scope of the poem is very limited, it provides some interesting information concerning some customs such as the binna and dīga forms of marriage and the dowry system. There is no reliable source of information of the authorship or the date of composition of the Nikini katāva. However, in a note left with the manuscript, Hugh Nevill states that 'the composition seems to be of the 18th century'. Further, he speaks of 'another ballad on the same subject... composed at A.D. 1790'.[1]

Documents such as grant-deeds, oppu and gōdāna patras form another invaluable source of information

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1. See Sinhala verse (kavi), Part I, p. 147.

concerning Sinhalese social life. In fact they contain more abundant material for the study of social history than is usually imagined. Several such documents have been utilised for this study.

Deeds of land grants usually consist of a detailed account of the purpose of the grant and of the extent and location of the land transferred. They also give the names, sometimes even the ancestry, of the parties concerned. It was always preferred to have persons of rank or importance as witnesses. The following observation of Knox may be noted in this connexion: 'The price of this Land was five and twenty Larees... The terms of Purchase being concluded on between us, a Writing was made upon a leaf after that Countrey manner, witnessed by seven or eight Men of the best Quality in the Town: which was delivered to me, and I paid the Money, and then took Possession of the Land'.[1] It is interesting to note that neither the parties concerned nor the witnesses signed the deed. The fact that the names of some great men were put down as witnesses was considered sufficient to make the transfer legally binding. Thus none of the deeds utilised by us bear any signatures. In contrast to the literary works mentioned above, these

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 232.

deeds are always precisely dated. Most of them are dated in the Śaka Era; some in the Buddhist Era; while a few are dated in the Christian Era.

Gōdana patras are a kind of deed executed by old persons who felt that their end was near and wished to donate some of their belongings to the Saṅgha in order to acquire merit for the next world. These documents give us some idea of the nature of the gōdana ceremony performed by the Sinhalese when a person was seriously ill and it became obvious that his death was near. Gōdana patras are usually shorter and simpler in form than the deeds executed when transferring land. Nevertheless they invariably give almost all the details found in the latter.

(II) Accounts by European writers

The value of the accounts of European writers for the study of the social history of the Kandyan period can hardly be exaggerated. Of these Robert Knox's An Historical Relation of Ceylon claims our attention first. Knox was an English sailor detained as a prisoner in the Kandyan kingdom for nearly twenty years. Knox himself says: 'I was taken prisoner one (sic) Zelone, 4th April, 1660. I was borne one (sic) Tower hill in London, 8th Feb: 1641. My Age when taken was 19 years: 1 Month and

27 dayes. Continewed prisoner thare 19 years 6 month 14 Dayes So that I was prisoner thare 4 Month and 17 dayes longer then (sic) I had lived in the world before'.[1] This, of course, was a prison without confinement, for he was free to move about the country without any restrictions: '... we could walk from one to the other, or where we would upon the Mountains, no man molesting or disturbing us in the least. So that we began to go about a Pedling, and Trading in the Country...'. Being thus practically at liberty Knox was able to acquaint himself with different aspects of the life of the people amongst whom he lived. His account, therefore, is admitted by scholars to be accurate and trustworthy. Of course there appear to have been certain things which Knox failed to understand, and his work is not entirely free from some misinterpretations. However they are not so numerous as to reduce its value. We may note here the comment of Ludowyk: 'Misunderstandings and misinterpretations do not destroy the value of his book. Knox has so much to tell, and above all he has nothing to hide, no ulterior motive to serve. He may have written to satisfy impulses of which he was not consciously aware, there may be exposed

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.XXIX.

in his book a self-conceit resembling that he attributed to the 'Chingulays', but this never obtrudes. Knox himself claimed among other things that he wrote the book to give himself practice in writing on the long voyage home. We could accept that, and not trouble unduly about his prejudices which are plain and for all to see. They are not offensive because much more strongly stated than either prejudice or mistake is his sober appreciation of a culture which, to have valued it as he did, was in itself proof of a lack of prejudice'.[1]

In addition to the material it provides for the reconstruction of the social history of the Kandyan period, Knox's work throws much light on the events of political history. All this evidence is in almost complete agreement with the facts known from the works of other European writers and Sinhalese literature.

Another work which constitutes a valuable source book for the student of the Kandyan period is Joao Ribeiro's History of Ceilao. Like Knox, Ribeiro too, was a keen observer and his work is a record of what he had seen and heard during the eighteen years he spent with the Portuguese garrison in Ceylon. Ribeiro landed

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1. E.F.C. Ludowyk, Robert Knox in the Kandyan Kingdon, pp. xiv, xv.

in Ceylon in 1640 and remained there till 1658. Both Ribeiro and Knox were in Ceylon more or less during the same period and, as is only to be expected, their works generally agree with each other on fundamental facts.

Most of what Ribeiro reports is also confirmed by Fernao De Queyroz. His work, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, is very comprehensive in its scope and provides abundant material for the study of the period under review. However, it is noteworthy that Queyroz never claims to have come to Ceylon. The material which forms the subject-matter of his work was collected by him from the works of previous Portuguese writers such as Joao De Barros and Diogo De Couto and also from his personal friends who visited the island or were residents therein. Queyroz spent most of his time in India until his death in 1688.

Phillipus Baldaeus's A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, forms another valuable source-book that was of immense use for the present study. It is the fruit of nine years stay in Ceylon. Baldaeus was a Dutch predikant who came to the island in 1656. After a years service in Galle he was appointed predikant over Jaffna, where he worked till 1665. Baldaeus's work contains a great deal of information concerning the people of northern provinces among whom he lived and worked for

eight years. Although his work is of greater use for an investigation of the Tamil society in Jaffna, it also offers much information regarding the inhabitants of the Kandyan provinces. The value of Baldaeus's work is not reduced by the fact that it deals with two distinct geographical and social units. For he does not attempt to speak of the places about which his knowledge was inadequate. Thus in reference to some places in the Eastern Province he states: 'With respect to the other stations, as there are no authentic accounts of them, I shall therefore omit them'.[1] This has tended to increase the reliability of the information which his work furnishes.

The first important work to be written after the British occupation of Kandy was John Davy's An Account of the Interior of Ceylon. This was published in 1821. With reference to his sources of information Davy states: 'This work is formed from original materials, which I collected in Ceylon, during a residence on that station, on the Medical Staff of the Army, from August, 1816, to February, 1820.

The substance of the three first chapters, on

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1. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 381.

the physical state of Island in general, and on some particular branches of natural history, is the result of my own enquiries, enriched by the contributions of some medical friends. The information contained in the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, on the Political Condition of the Interior, and on its Old Form of Government, was obtained from native sources; principally from Kandyan chiefs high in office, and conversant with business, and who were constantly in attendance at the court of the dethroned monarch... In writing the nineth chapter, on the Domestic Manners and Habits, and the Character of the Natives, I strived to lay aside prejudice, turn a deaf ear to idle stories, and do justice to a race hitherto under-rated, perhaps, and certainly often calumniated'.[1] Seeing the great care with which Davy has collected his material, it is not surprising that his work is hailed as the first scientific book to be written on Ceylon. Davy was one of the writers who clearly realised the fact that behind almost every Sinhalese custom there was a definite social need. The observations made by him on customs such as polyandry reveal this. Davy touches upon even the minutest aspects of Sinhalese family life, and the information which his work provides

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. v, vi.

concerning ceremonies which surrounded events such as name-giving, marriage and death, almost always agree with the information we get from the Sinhalese sources.

There are several other works by European writers compiled a few years from the fall of Kandy which prove useful to those seeking to make a study of the social life of the Sinhalese in Kandyan times. Of these Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and its Inhabitants by Henry Marshall who 'went to Ceylon in 1808, as Assistant-Surgeon in the 89th Regiment' and 'belonged to the first division of the army which was assembled for the invasion of the kingdom of Kandy' reveals a sympathetic understanding of the Sinhalese way of life.

Anthony Bertolacci's A View of the Agricultural, Commercial, and Financial Interests of Ceylon furnishes a fund of information regarding the caste system, land tenure, trade and other economic matters. Bertolacci was in Ceylon from 1798 to 1814 and his work was published in 1817. Mention must also be made of the appendix entitled Answers given by some of the best-informed Candian Priests, to Questions put to them by Governor Falk, in the year 1769, respecting the antient Laws and Customs of their Country which was of much use for the present study.

Major J. Forbes who 'in 1826 and for some years afterwards held a civil appointment in the Kandyan country' published his Eleven Years in Ceylon in 1840. This work is very comprehensive in its scope and deals, in a large number of chapters, with different aspects of Sinhalese life. The chapter entitled Kandyan Festivals is the most important, from our point of view. It treats of the annual cycle of public festivals as well as the ceremonials which were purely domestic and private in character. Much information on the same subject lies scattered in the other chapters too. Hence Forbes's work can be regarded as a store-house of facts concerning the ceremonial life of the Sinhalese.

In addition to the works mentioned above, we have utilised quite a number of other works by later writers such as William Knighton's The History of Ceylon, R. Spence Hardy's Eastern Monachism and James Emerson Tennent's Ceylon. Although these works were written in mid nineteenth century, a few decades after the fall of Kandy, their authors were close enough to the days when a vast majority of the Sinhalese were unaffected by European contact and their customs and institutions were in existence unaltered.

(III) Folk-songs and Folk-tales

Evidence is not lacking to establish that even the ordinary Sinhalese had a taste for poetry and music. Davy observes: 'Reading and writing are far from uncommon acquirements, and are almost as general as in England amongst the male part of the population... Almost every Singalese is, more or less, a poet; or, at least, can compose what they call poetry... All their poetry is sung or recited: they have seven tunes by which they are modulated. Their most admired tune is called 'The Horse-trot', from the resemblance which it bears to the sound of the trotting of a horse.

Of their music, which is extremely simple, they are very fond, and prefer it greatly to ours, which, they say, they do not understand.[1] Knox, too, often refers to Sinhalese villagers who 'sing songs until they fall a sleep' and 'teach and bid their children to sing songs when they go to bed'.[2] He further refers to some ballads 'sung much among the common people'.[3]

Poetry being so much a part of life of the

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 237, 239.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 145, 146.

3. Ibid, p. 285.

Sinhalese it is not surprising that a large number of folk-songs have come down to us by word of mouth. These songs are obviously nearer life than were the classical literary works. Hence the store of Sinhalese folk-songs includes in its scope such subjects as sterility,[1] pregnancy,[2] marriage age,[3] polyandry,[4] cross-cousin marriage,[5] binna and diga forms of marriage,[6] the practice of making vows of sacrifice to gods to secure their forbearance and help[7] and old age.[8] There are songs, which specifically refer to various ceremonies connected with the major crises of life such as the ceremony of shaving of the beard which signalled a boy's entry into a new stage in the life cycle[9] and the puberty ceremony of girls.[10] Many songs idealise certain social customs

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1. See infra, p.99.
2. See infra, p.97.
3. See infra, p.173.
4. See infra, p.244.
5. See infra, p.195.
6. See infra, p.207.
7. See infra, p.100.
8. See infra, p.341.
9. See infra, p.163.
10. See infra, p.170.

while ridiculing others. For instance there are a good number of folk-songs which idealise early marriage and ridicule old spinsters.[1] This is because according to the Sinhalese social opinion bachelors and spinsters were not regarded as full-fledged members of the society. There are scores of such songs which reflect the thoughts and sentiments of the common people. There is also a class of songs which treats of only detached incidents. Even these, however, have not sprung from pure imagination and are valuable for the information they furnish at least in an incidental manner. In fact, quite a number of songs which were of great use for the present work merely portray some isolated situations.

There is no means of determining the authorship or the period of composition of most of the Sinhalese folk-songs. It has often been suggested that no particular persons could be credited with their authorship and that they are the product of the community as a whole. Whatever the value of this opinion may be, there is no doubt that these songs reflect the thoughts and sentiments of the common people of an early age. Some of them contain such words as sappāyan, karapanna, tinbiri gē, rupun, kusaya and bojun which are more or less obsolete, inevitably

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1. See infra, p.164.

suggesting that they have come to us from a period anterior to mid nineteenth century. Their social background also argues for them an early period.

It is noteworthy that most of the folk-songs we have utilised for the present study are not easily amenable to translation. Some songs contain certain key-words on which the meaning of the songs depend. Similarly folk poets often use words such as <u>don don</u> which have hardly any connexion with the main theme of their verses. Such words are often used for concealing any deficiency in the rhyme. They also use conventional refrains when their imagination fail. Factors such as these make the task of translating folk-songs somewhat difficult. We have quoted a certain number of folk-songs in support of our views and in translating them we have tried our best to preserve their original shape without giving any additional colouring.

Folk-tales are another invaluable source of information concerning Sinhalese social life. They help us exactly in the same degree as folk-songs. Story telling was an art practised from immemorial times and most of the Sinhalese folk-tales which have come down to us seem to incorporate some very old matter. This is their chief attraction. A considerable number of Sinhalese folk-tales have been collected and translated into English by

H.Parker. They were published in the years 1910 to 1914 in three volumes entitled Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon. Parker's collection of folk-tales was of immense use for the present study. The value of this collection is enhanced by the fact that the compiler has done his best to bring the folk-tales before the reader in their original shape without embellishing them by his scholarship. In his introduction to the first volume Parker himself states: 'The stories, as they now appear, are practically literal translations of the written Sinhalese originals, perhaps it may be thought in some respects too literal. My aim has been to present them as nearly as possible in the words in which they are related in the villages. The only liberty of any importance that I have taken has been the insertion of an occasional word or phrase where it was evidently omitted by the narrator, or was necessary in order to elucidate the meaning, or complete the sence'.[1]

Although folk-tales can be regarded as a rich source of information concerning almost every phase of life of the Sinhalese in the social as well as domestic spheres, that does not mean that they give us a connected account of any particular custom or institution. Their original purpose being quite different from that of

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1. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 31.

providing historical and sociological information the reference they make to them are generally incidental. Such references and allusions, however, are quite numerous and the evidence they provide forms a valuable supplement to our knowledge obtained from other sources.

Chapter II

Social Structure

Caste, kula, constituted the structural basis of Sinhalese society during the Kandyan period, as it had been in earlier times also. In Ceylon, unlike in India, caste failed to acquire religious sanction[1]. It is seen, however, that in spite of the fact that it rested mainly on secular foundations, the institution of caste held sway in the Sinhalese social set-up through the centuries.

In India, all castes were fitted into four main classes (caturvarna), namely, brāhmanas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras. In Ceylon, too, there appears to have been a tendency to place each caste theoretically in one of the four major Indian classes. It is clear, however, that in Ceylon the ksatriyas constantly occupied the topmost rung of the social ladder. Thus the Gadalādeniya rock-instription refers to the four castes in the following order of descending status: ksatriyas, brāhmanas, vaiśyas and śūdras[2]. In the literature too the ksatriyas have been given the

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1. It is well known that Buddhism, the religion of the vast majority of the Sinhalese, did not recognize distinctions based on caste. See Suttanipāta, p. 211ff. In sharp contrast, caste was so permeated with Hinduism that some scholars hold that it is 'impossible to detach Hinduism from the caste system'. M.N. Srinivas, Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, p. 150.

2. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. IV, p. 106.

highest place in the social hierarchy[1].

It is not surprising that in Buddhist Ceylon the brāhmaṇas failed to hold the pre-eminent position. However, there were in Ceylon a certain number of immigrant brāhmaṇas from India who acted as guides and councillors to the Sinhalese kings[2].

Even during the Kandyan period proper a traditional four-fold caste division was often postulated despite the fact that there were no fewer than twenty castes in actual practice. The only difference was that at this time the govi (cultivator) caste had come to be regarded as the fourth order in the theoretical four-fold caste division. Thus in many of the records of the period under review, all castes in Ceylon have been brought under the following four broad groupings, namely, raja vamsaya, brāhmaṇa vamsaya, vānija vamsaya and govi vamsaya[3]. However, since there

1. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 61; Janavamsaya, Or. 6606 (180), Fol. 10; Mahāvamsa, p. 14.

2. For instance, the Mahāvamsa states that king Devānampiya Tissa (250-210 BC) bestowed the office of chaplain on a brāhmaṇa. Mahāvamsa, p. 79. The same source mentions a brāhmaṇa palace priest named Niliya employed by queen Anulā (48-44 BC). Ibid, p. 239. The Oruvala sannasa of Parākramabāhu VI (A.D.1412-1467) refers to two brāhmaṇas who received land for services they rendered as chaplains. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 68.

3. Kula nītiya, Or.6606 (49), Fol.5; Answers given by some of the best-informed Candian Priests, to Questions put to them by Governor Falk, in the year 1769, respecting the ancient Laws and Customs of their Country, in Anthony Bertolacci's Ceylon, Appendix A,p.474; J.W. Bennett, Ceylon and its Capabilities, p. 364. See also William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 52.

were no castes exactly corresponding to the ksatriyas, brāhmaṇas or vaiśyas in actual practice, the govi people who were at the bottom of the new four-fold caste model have, paradoxically, emerged as the highest caste in the social hierarchy as it operated in Kandyan times. Writing in 1859 Tennent observes: 'Practically, the Singhalese ignore three of the great classes, theoretically maintained by the Hindus; among them there are neither Brahmans, Vaisyas, nor Kshastryas; and at the head of the class which they retain, they place the Goi-wanse or Vellalas, nominally "tillers of the soil"'[1]. The Nīti nighanduva puts forward the following theory in order to explain this remarkable phenomenon: 'Representatives of the Raja, Bamunu and Welanda castes had from time to time come over to live here. They did not however preserve their castes intact, but intermarried with the gowiya caste, and it is for this reason that the gowiya is considered the chief caste in this kingdom.'[2] Whatever the historical value of this statement may be, it bears evidence of the fact

1. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol.I, p.426; In this connexion Coomaraswamy observes: 'But as there was no place for Brahmans in a Buddhist country, and the royal family formed a caste by itself, and the merchants were few or none, the goviyō have remained to this day of chief importance from the caste point of view.' A.K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 21. See also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 72.

2. Nīti nighanduva, (Eng. Tr.) p. 6.

that the govi caste was considered to be the highest in Kandyan times.

Even as early as in the twelfth century the govi caste appears to have exercised a dominant position. Some members of this caste may even have claimed equality with the ksatriyas and aspired to kingship. This is probably the reason why kings such as Nissankamalla (A.D. 1187-1196) found it necessary to speak of the unsuitability of the people of the govi caste for the kingship: 'People of the Govi caste should never aspire to the dignity of kingship, (for this would be) like the crow aping the swan (or) the donkey the Saindhava steed, (or) the worm the cobra-king, (or) the jackal the lion. However powerful the people of the Govi caste may be, they should not be elected (to rule) the kingdom.'[1]

The caste hierarchy as it prevailed in Kandyan times can be pieced together to a certain extent from the accounts given by the writers of the day. Authorities are unanimously agreed that the govi (cultivator) caste was at the top

1. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. II, p.164; It is interesting to note that in the Pärakumbā sirita, a sixteenth century Sinhalese poem, there is a passing reference to kings who belonged to the govi caste. See Pärakumbā sirita, v. 28. Writing in the mid-seventeenth century Knox mentions a Sinhalese maxim current at the time which expresses the suitability of the cultivator to the regal dignity: 'Take a Ploughman from the Plough, and wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a Kingdom.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 171.

of the social hierarchy[1]. However, it is somewhat difficult to determine the exact position of some of the castes which were placed lower down in the social scale.

Davy who approves the traditional superiority of the govi caste, places the karāve or the fisher caste next to it, and arranges the other castes in order of their social status as follows: chandos (toddy-drawers), āchāri (smiths), hannāli (tailors), badahāla (potters), ämbättayo (barbers), radā (washermen), hāli (cinnamon-peelers), hakuru (jaggery-makers), hunu (lime-burners), pannayo (grass-cutters), villidurai (weavers), dada väddo (hunters), padu (iron-smelters and executioners), berava (drummers and weavers),

1. 'The Goewanse, or, as named in the low country, Wellales, constitute by far the largest caste of the Singalese. Agriculture, their original employ, is not now their sole occupation. They are a privileged people, and monopolize all the honours of church and state, and possess all the hereditary rank in the country.' John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 113; 'The first or highest cast (sic) is that of the handerooas, or vellalas, who follow the occupation of agriculture.' James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol.I., p. 93. 'The highest, are their Noblemen, called Hondrews.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 106. '....the highest caste is that of the cultivators, called Goya-wanzae, the same as is known in the maritime provinces by the appellation of Wellale.' Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p.72; See also Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p. 258; J.W. Bennett, Ceylon and its Capabilities, p. 364; James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 426.

handi (makers of baskets and winnows), pallaru, olī (dancers), palī (washermen of low castes), kinnaru (makers of mats), rodī (outcastes, makers of ropes)[1].

According to the account given by Knox, next to the govi (cultivator) caste came the smiths[2]. Within this caste there were further rankings based on occupation. They were goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and painters. Knox says that these subcastes were of more or less equal status. He places the other castes in the following order of descending status: elephant catchers, barbers, potters, washers, jaggery-makers, padu (who were of no trade or craft), weavers (also drummers and astrologers), kidiyo (basket-makers), kinnaru (mat-weavers), rodī (outcastes, makers of ropes)[3].

Neither the Nīti nighanduva nor the Janavamsaya attributes the second place in the social ladder to the smiths. But the Nīti nighanduva agrees with Davy when it places the karāve or the fisher caste next to the govi caste[4]. The Janavamsaya which differs from both Knox and Davy gives the hāli or salāgama caste (cinnamon peelers) the second

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 113ff.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 107.
3. Ibid, pp. 109ff.
4. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.) p. 6.

place in the social scale[1]. Thus it becomes clear that authorities differ somewhat as to the order of precedence of some castes.

It is evident that caste was usually identified with

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1. Janavamsaya, Or. 6606 (180), Fol. 10 ff; Cinnamon peeling has been considered the traditional occupation of this caste. See Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilão, p. 108; Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 20. However, according to some sources their original occupation was weaving. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch governor Jan Schreuder writes: 'The ancestors of those who are called Chalias were mostly weavers who came from the Coromandel Coast and were reckoned among the respectable classes.....In the year 1406 they made themselves so hated by the King of Kotte both through their ingratitude and other causes that he imposed on them by way of punishment the work of peeling of cinnamon, which before that time was performed by other indigenous castes of this country.
   It was for that reason and at that time that the cinnamon service was first assigned to them and they have continued to perform it ever since except that some of the least blameworthy were employed as coolies by the King, and others who were found less guilty were placed over them as Durayas or petty headmen.....
   When we in our turn conquered this country, we in like manner assigned the same service to these people.....' Memoir of Jan Schreuder, 1757 - 1762, tr. by E. Reimers, p. 74; Bertolacci observes that besides their occupation of cultivating and peeling cinnamon, the members of the salägama caste were almost all weavers, and that in the southern parts of the island there were no other weavers but them. See Anthony Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, p. 43.

occupational specialisation[1]. In fact many castes even bore names derived from the traditional occupations pursued by their members. For example, beravā, the name of the drummers' caste, means one who beats drums. Hakuru, the jaggery-making caste, derives its name from hakuru or jaggery; and hunu, the name of the lime-burners' caste, is derived from the word hunu, lime. However, it is not safe to build a classification of castes solely upon occupation because of several reasons. Firstly, there were some castes which did not possess and pursue any specific hereditary occupation. This was the case with the paduvas who formed a numerous caste. Knox describes this group as a caste of no trade or craft[2]. And Davy states that they 'had to perform a variety of low services.'[3]

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1. Bertolacci remarks: 'What is this distinction of casts, but a division of labour carried to some degree of perfection, made permanent by those laws, and fixed to certain families and classes of society?' Anthony Bertolacci, A view of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, p. 47. See also J.L. Guyard, Journal of a Journey in Travels in Ceylon, tr. by R. Raven-Hart, p. 53; Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p. 259; Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 19.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 110.

3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 128.

Secondly there appear to have been some castes which were engaged in other callings besides the particular occupation which formed their main source of livelihood. Thus although drumming was the traditional calling of the berava caste, its members practised astrology and weaving as supplementary to their main occupation[1]. The drummer's scope for employment was indeed limited, for his services were required only on ceremonial occasions. This may have compelled him to supplement his traditional calling with a side-line. Similarly, although jaggery-making was considered to be the traditional occupation of the hakuru caste, in actual practice its members seem to have earned their livelihood by performing a variety of other services[2]. It is noteworthy that very often low castes had separate villages of their own. For instance the Mandaram pura puvata refers to villages of washermen, potters, drummers and jaggery makers[3]. When a village was inhabited exclusively by a particular caste associated with a specific occupation, that village obviously could

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 110.

2. Davy states that some members of this caste served as cooks, coolies and palanquin-bearers. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 127; See also James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 93.

3. Mandaram pura puvata, v. 21.

not provide work for all its inmates. Some authorities indeed mention that many handicrafts were 'much over-crowded'[1]. When forced by such circumstances the excess may have had to take up new occupations in preference to their hereditary calling[2].

Thirdly there were some occupations which could be pursued by any caste irrespective of its position in the traditional caste hierarchy. For example, although theoretically agriculture was considered to be the preserve of the govi caste[3], in practice it was open to almost everyone. Thus Queyroz observes that 'the occupation of husbandry' was 'common almost to all castes and highly esteemed' among the Sinhalese[4]. Moreover even the rodiyas who were right down at the bottom of the

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 118.

2. Evidence suggests that it was not possible for members of an overcrowded profession to move out of a village when there was a lack of local opportunities. According to the rules prescribed by tradition no artisan could usually serve another's clients outside his own domain. With reference to smiths Knox observes: 'These have this Privilege, that each has a parcel of Towns belonging to them, whom none but they are to work for....That which makes these Smiths thus stately is, because the Towns People are compelled to go to their own Smith, and none else. And if they should, that Smith is liable to pay Damages that should do work for any in another Smith's Jurisdiction.' Robert Knox, An Historicall Relation of Ceylon, p. 108.

3. Perhaps this notion prompted Heydt to speak of a caste which lived 'only from agriculture'. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 118.

4. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 92.

social scale were not 'entirely destitute of lands'[1]. We may, therefore, say that most castes practised their traditional occupation in conjunction with agriculture. On the other hand agricultural work is of a seasonal nature and during off seasons even the people who regarded agriculture as their ancestral calling may have taken to other occupations which were not regarded as improper for a person who belonged to a high caste.

Military service was another occupation which most castes could follow irrespective of their position in the social scale. Thus D'Oyly notes in his diary: 'The people of Kandy said, that they were making preparations for War.....There are several Singhaleze drilling-21 Divisions of 30 Men each composed of Young Men of all Casts.'[2] Queyroz too testifies to the fact that military service was not a caste-linked occupation when he states that when any person followed the profession of arms, his remuneration was raised or lowered according to his caste[3].

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 130.

2. John D'Oyly, Diary, ed. by H.W. Codrington, p. 46; Another entry which suggests that military service was an open profession, runs as follows: 'They saw also a number of People, Moormen, Vellales, Paduwas and Pannayas drilling in the Maluwa, by the Dutchman, who was taken Prisoner in the war.' Ibid, p. 28.

3. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 98. See also Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 144.

The foregoing facts make it clear that there was a certain degree of flexibility in the occupational system[1]. However, there should be no reasonable doubt that occupation was one of the important determining factors in the matter of social gradation, for occupations which were traditionally linked with castes were usually arranged hierarchically, a specific place being assigned to each at least theoretically.

It is difficult to say that determination of the status attached to a particular occupation was based on the economic gain that accrued by pursuing it. Thus although agriculture was considered to be at the top of the occupational hierarchy one cannot say that those who followed that occupation were always economically better off than others. In fact there was no correlation between economic rank and the ranking of caste. The following observation of Knox suggests this: 'Among this People there are divers and sundry Casts or degrees of Quality, which is not according to their Riches or Places of Honour the King promotes them to....Riches are not here

1. Writing in the early nineteenth century Davy observes: 'As before observed, the Singalese experience less of the effects of castes than their neighbours the Hindoos; a very large portion of the whole Singalese population being on an equality, and at liberty to pursue any liberal occupation.' John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 133.

valued, nor make any the more Honourable. For many of the lower sorts do far exceed these Hondrews in Estates.'[1]

Interrelations between the different castes mentioned above were governed by rules of conduct laid down by tradition. The rules of endogamy compelled one to marry within one's own caste[2]. Similarly there were numerous rules governing commensality. Usually one did not accept cooked food from a person who belonged to a caste considered lower to one's own. Queyroz observes: 'They likewise conform to the customs of the other heathens in their food, not touching what was not cooked by those of their own caste, (carrying it) to such extremes, that if they travel in the lands of other castes, they sustain themselves only on the leaf of the betle.(sic)'[3] If two castes could eat together they could also intermarry, for mutual acceptability of food denoted equal social status between two individuals. It is interesting to note that this notion has given rise to a peculiar marriage rite[4].

The rules of exclusion applied also to drinking.

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 105, 106.

2. A discussion of this will be found in the chapter on Marriage. See infra, pp.178ff

3. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 99.

4. See infra, p.225.

High castes did not accept water from those castes that were classified lower than their own. Similarly the fear of getting polluted compelled the higher castes to refrain from drinking water out of vessels used by their inferiors. The notion of pollution was sometimes carried to such extremes that the vessels in which water was served to low castes were sometimes destroyed. Davy thus makes a casual reference to this practice: 'Owing to the influence and prejudice of caste, the consumption of this ware is extraordinarily great amongst the Singhalese, who consider themselves disgraced and polluted if they drink out of vessels that have touched the lips of their inferiors, - and, in consequence, after a feast at which people of different castes have been entertained, all the earthenware vessels used on the occasion are destroyed.'[1] The usual method of serving water to a person who belonged to a lower caste was to pour it into his cupped palm. Knox not only mentions this practice but also gives an exception to the general rule: 'But they have this Privilege, because they make the Pots, that when they are athirst being at a Hondrew's House, they may take his Pot, which hath a Pipe to it, and pour the Water into their mouths themselves: which none other of these inferior degrees may be admitted to do: but they must hold their hands to their

1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 125.

mouths and gape, and the Hondrews themselves will pour Water in. The Potters were at first denied this Honour, upon which they joyntly agreed to make Pots with Pipes only for themselves, and would sell none to the Hondrews that wanted; whereat being constrained, they condescended to grant them the Honour above other inferior People, that they should have the favour to drink out of these Pots with spouts at their Houses.'[1] There were numerous other points in which a person who was lower down in the social scale suffered. Even in the matter of dress his inferior position in the caste hierarchy was symbolized. Ribeiro observes that one could not conceal one's caste as this was always evident from the clothes one wore[2]. The

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 109; See also Philippus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.385; Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 114; Johann Von Der Behr, Diarium or Day-Book in Germans in Dutch Ceylon, tr. by R. Raven-Hart, Vol. I, p. 7.

2. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 144; In this connexion Knox observes: 'These are distinguished from others by their names, and the wearing of their cloth, which the Men wear down half their Legs, and the Women to their Heels: one end of which Cloth the Women fling over their Shoulders, and with the very end carelesly cover their Breasts; whereas the other sort of Women must go naked from the wast (sic) upwards, and their Cloaths not hang down much below their Knees; except it be cold; for then either Women or Men may throw their Cloth over their Backs. But then they do excuse it to the Hondrews, when they meet them, saying, Excuse me, it is for warmth.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.106. See also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 299; Christopher Schweitzer's Journal and Diary in Germans in Dutch Ceylon tr. by R. Raven-Hart, Vol. I, p. 45.

paduvas, for instance were not permitted to wear a cloth that reached below their knees; and their women were 'not entitled to wear one over their shoulders or to conceal the upper part of their bodies'[1]. The potters were not allowed to wear doublets[2]. Queyroz observes that some of those who were placed in the lower grades of the social system could not 'wear clothes altogether white without some mixture of colour'[3]. According to Knox, the colour of one's head-gear too varied according to one's caste: 'If they be Hondrews, their Caps are all of one Colour, either White or Blew: if of inferior quality, then the Cap and the flaps on each side be of different Colours, whereof the Flaps are always Red.'[4] It is interesting to note that members of some castes which occupied a lowly position in the caste hierarchy were even debarred from wâring a beard or growing the hair long and tying it up in a knot behind (konde)[5]. Nor could they perform certain rituals. Several writers state that low castes were not

1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 128.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 109.
3. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 98.
4. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 106.
5. John D'Oyly, Diary, ed. by H.W. Codrington, p. 115. See also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 298.

permitted to cremate their dead[1].

Further, members of the lowest ranks of the society were not permitted full access to the homes of the higher castes[2]. Similar discriminatory barriers were maintained even on the high-way. Heydt says: 'This happening caused me to enquire further from such as had good knowledge of their customs and stations, and it was told me by those who had been long among them, as also by themselves, that.....if persons of higher and lower caste meet one another on the road, then the latter must go a few steps out of the way, whether he is loaded or not, and show due respect.'[3] The Sinhalese social pattern demanded that low castes must yield gracefully to these traditional rules of behaviour. A severe attitude was usually taken towards offenders against them. Bennett describes an

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1. See infra p. 371.

2. '.....and also a man of low caste cannot enter the noble's gate, but must stand outside and ask for what he desires or is in want of.' Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 144. In this connexion Herport observes: 'Those of lower Station honour the higher, and may have no Company with them, nor go into their Houses, unless by their Will.' Albrecht Herport, A Short Description of a Nine-Year East-Indian Journey in Germans in Dutch Ceylon, tr. by R. Raven-Hart, Vol. I, p. 29.

3. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 114. See also Albrecht Herport, A Short Description of a Nine-Year East-Indian Journey, in Germans in Dutch Ceylon, tr. by R. Raven-Hart, Vol. I, p. 29.

an incident which helps us to realise how rigorously some social disabilities were sometimes enforced against the lower ranks of the society: 'I was once passing through the Bazaar at Barberyn, in the western province, when an unusual mob had collected in the street; and I learned that a woman of the Padua caste had been nearly killed by some indignant Wellales and Chandoos, for "having presumed so far to forget her degraded lot in life as to throw a kerchief over her neck and shoulders!!"'[1] Heydt narrates how he saw a man being'kicked and abused violently' for violating the commensal rules of eating and drinking[2].

Although the idea of untouchability was not so highly developed in Ceylon as in India, evidence is not lacking to establish that it prevailed to a certain extent. For example, the rodiyas who were right down at the bottom of the caste hierarchy were expected to keep at a respectable distance from the higher castes[3].

The notions of purity and pollution were carried still

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1. J.W. Bennett, Ceylon and its Capabilities, p. 112.

2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 114.

3. Writing concerning the rodiyas Tennent observes that they were not permitted to 'come within a fenced field even to beg' and also that they could not enter a court of justice, 'and if wronged had to utter their complaints from a distance'. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol.II, p. 188. See also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 75; Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p. 260.

further. The following observation of Davy indicates the extent to which the higher castes observed untouchability and unapproachability with the rodiyas: 'But it is not true, as has been asserted, that on such an occasion he must prostrate himself for the Goewanse to walk over his body; indeed such a practice would be incompatible with the notion of impurity attached to their touch, and which is so firmly impressed on the minds of the Singhalese, that they have been known to refuse to obey the orders of our government to make prisoners certain Rhodees suspected of a murder, saying, "they could not pollute themselves by seizing them, but they would willingly shoot them at a distance".'[1] The high castes not only avoided physical contact with the rodiyas[2] but also did not accept even uncooked food handled by them, for the impurity was believed to be transmitted by their very touch[3].

Thus we may conclude that the notion of untouchability was not entirely absent in Ceylon in Kandyan times.

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 131.

2. 'Neither will any touch them, lest they should be defiled.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 112.

3. Knox testifies to this when he states: 'There are some of this sort of People which.....shoot Deer and sell them where they fall in the Woods; for if they should but touch them, none would buy them.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 114.

Since tradition had given to each caste a fixed position, a person born in a particular caste could not move upwards on the social ladder[1]. He could, however, move downwards by living with people who belonged to a caste lower to his own. Evidence indicates that sometimes the king altered the caste status of those who incurred his wrath by forcing to do this. Thus when in 1814 the first adigar Ähälepola stirred the people of Sabaragamuva province to rise in revolt and later sought shelter in British territory, king Srī Vikrama Rājasimha (1798-1815) is supposed to have ordered the wives and daughters of the adigar's followers to be delivered to the rodiyas in order to degrade the former to the rank of the latter[2]. With reference to this method of lowering a person's status in the social scale Tennent observes: 'The most dreaded of all punishments under the Kandyan dynasty was to hand over the lady of a high caste offender to the Rodiyas; and the mode of her adoption was by the Rodiya taking betel from his own mouth and placing it in

1. 'Each is expected to remain by his caste and station: of whatever caste he may be, in that he must remain.' Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 117. See also Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105; Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p. 259.

2. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and Its Inhabitants, p. 32.

hers, after which till death her degradation was indelible[1]. When some of the best informed Kandyan monks were asked by the Dutch governor Falk whether the king could 'degrade those who are highly born', they are supposed to have given the following answer: 'If a person of high rank has been guilty of treason, or of any other weighty offence, he may be seized; and, his crime having been inquired into by the Court of Justice, he may be either put to death, or reduced to a low cast.'[2] Even the king, however, could not raise a person's status in the social scale: 'Persons of low cast may be promoted to be chief in their own tribe, but cannot be advanced to the rank and privileges of men of a higher cast.'[3]

It is noteworthy that the caste system was geared to the state administration. Many of the castes, in fact,

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1. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 189. Knox mentions this form of outcasting as a punishment dreaded beyond death. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 114. See also John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom (Ceylon), p. 59.

2. Answers given by some of the best-informed Candian Priests, to questions put to them by Governor Falk, in the year 1769, respecting the antient Laws and Customs of their Country, in Anthony Bertolacci's A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, Appendix A, p. 459.

3. Ibid; See also Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105.

functioned as separate state departments under their own headmen[1]. And those castes which thus constituted state departments were bound to serve the king in rotation, in return for which they received land. Knox makes the following observation regarding this system of labour: 'The Countrey being wholly His, the King Farms out his Land, not for Money, but Service. And the People enjoy Portions of Land from the King, and instead of Rent, they have their several appointments, some are to serve the

1. The headman of a caste was usually styled nilame or vidāna. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 157. But the headmen of castes which were lower down in the social scale were termed duraya. John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom (Ceylon), p. 11. Even the Dutch, who adhered to the customs and usages of the Sinhalese as far as possible, seem to have followed the practice of appointing headmen over different castes. The following is an Act of Maha Vidana issued by them in 1758. 'Whereas the Chief of the Sinhalese Gold and Silversmiths as well as Jewel setter of this place, Joan de Mens, owing to advancing years and infirmity of body, has made application to us to be relieved of his duties with the honorary designation of "late Master of the Silversmiths", and in his place to appoint his son, Adriaan Mens, as Maha Vidaan over the Silversmiths of the twenty-four families to which these services have been restricted in these Commandements (Galle), we therefore, in consideration of his ability, have no desire to deny him this request, but do by these presents appoint him, Adriaan Mens, Maha Vidaan over the aforesaid Singalese Silversmiths and their lesser Chiefs, with the title of Wiedjesoerendre, with the grant to him as his fixed accommaodessan of twelve ammonams of ottu sowing land.....Given in the Town of Galle on the 21st May, 1758. A. de Ly. (Cammandeur).' Report on the Dutch Records in the Government Archives at Colombo, p. 59.

King in his Wars, some in their Trades, some serve him for Labourers, and others are as Farmers to furnish his House with the Fruits of the Ground; and so all things are done without Cost and every man paid for his pains: that is, they have Lands for it.'[1] Describing the machinery through which the labour resources available in the country were mobilized in the direct service of the king, Davy states that 'each caste had certain dues to pay, certain services to perform, and was under the command of officers who were responsible for any neglect of duties.'[2]

It was considered the duty of the king to see to it that the caste system did not get weakened. As the supreme arbiter in matters pertaining to law and order, it was within the power of the king to prevent the members of different castes from doing anything which was considered contrary to their caste-traditions. Thus Srī Vikrama Rājasimha is said to have issued orders forcing the low castes to observe the traditional rules of

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 68,69.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 122. See also João Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 104; Anthony Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, pp. 277, 278; This system of labour was called rājakāriya. It is evident that it promoted the institution of polyandry to a considerable extent. See infra, pp.236 ff

behaviour. D'Oyly notes in his diary: 'Fresh Orders have been issued in the Country fixing a low Price upon all Articles....Order has also been given reducing the wanan inan (lower castes) to their Original Ranks. Paduwas and Berawayas cannot wear Beards nor Konda-Hakuro, Durawe and Hali can wear no Ohori (Jackets) but may wear Konda - and other Regulations are enforced with respect to dress.'[1] The king was especially keen on seeing that cases involving infringement of more important caste rules such as those on intermarriage were properly dealt with. D'Oyly states: 'The marriage of a man with a woman of a superior caste to himself, is prohibited - and even carnal conversation between the sexes of different castes, is penal- especially the connection of higher Caste woman with a lower caste man -

The Chiefs adduce instances of punishments having been inflicted on the parties thus offending, Vizt. Meegastenne Junior 2d Adigar was reprimanded by the King for keeping a concubine of the Berewaya Caste - and the woman was flogged and sent across the river and thus banished from Kandy -.'[2] This appears to have been the

1. John D'Oyly, Diary, ed. by H.W. Codrington, p. 115; The Mandāram pura puvata states that king Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha issued a decree to the effect that Higher Ordination should not be conferred on monks belonging to low castes. vv. 859, 860.

2. John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom (Ceylon), p. 130.

position even in more ancient times, for chronicles often refer to instances when the king interfered in caste matters. For example, the Cūlavamsa states that during the reign of queen Kalyāṇavatī (A.D. 1202-1208) 'the four castes which had been mingled' together were separated[1]. Undoubtedly this was an attempt made to fix the order of precedence among different caste groups. The same chronicle states that Vijayabāhu IV (A.D. 1270-1272) commanded 'all the inhabitants of Lanka that they should each betake himself (to his trade or occupation).'[2] This appears to have been an attempt made to confine various castes to their hereditary callings. This evidence indicates that even during the early periods kings desired to see that the people observed the caste rules to the letter.

It is necessary to stress that although rules governing such factors as marriage, commensality and occupation had some tendency to insulate castes from each other[3], in their everyday life members of different

1. Mahāvamsa Part II, tr. by L.C. Wijesinha, p. 222.

2. Ibid, p. 254.

3. The social exclusiveness which existed to a certain degree between the members of different castes has prompted some authorities to make such statements as the following: 'There is no familiar intercourse between individuals of incongruous castes, no friendly domestic meetings, and no association even in the normal

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caste groups did not live in entirely separate and water-tight compartments. On the contrary, there appears to have been a considerable degree of inter-caste co-operation in the spheres of social and economic activity. It was during domestic ceremonial occasions such as birth, puberty, marriage and death that this interdependence was especially manifested.

For instance, although the washer caste was rated very low according to the gradations of inter-caste regulations, the washerman's services were in demand at practically every ceremony connected with the major crises of life. A woman of this caste was called in to officiate at the puberty ceremony of girls. During her first menses a girl was considered to be defiled, and it was the washerwoman who rendered her free from pollution by giving her a purificatory bath[1].

At marriage, a washerman accompanied the bridegroom's party to the bride's house where he played an important part[2]. And at death ceremonies he supplied the strip of

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Footnote 3 continued from previous page.
festivities of weddings, or the solemnities that do honour to the dead. The social segregation is carried to such an extreme, that members of the several classes into which each caste is subdivided, with a distinctive rank for each, refuse to associate together; and a Vellale of the first class would shrink from the communication with a Vellale of a lower order, with as much sensitiveness as he would avoid contact with a washer or a Chalia.' James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, pp. 157, 158.

1. See infra, p.156.
2. See infra, p.219.

cloth with which the face of the corpse was covered[1]. Further, the washerman provided the mourners returning from the funeral place with newly washed clothes which the latter put on after undergoing purification by bathing[2]. In fact, it was the washerman who provided newly washed cloths for all material and ritualistic purposes. The washer caste rendered these services to all castes whose social position was higher than their own[3].

Similarly, the drummer's services were in demand on many ceremonial occasions. He beat drums at funerals and also preceded funeral processions[4]. Further, monks who performed religious ceremonies were usually conducted to the house in procession accompanied by music provided by members of this caste[5]. The services of the drummers' caste were needed in another sphere, namely, astrology, for as has already been mentioned, drummers specialized

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1. See infra, p.373.
2. See infra, p.382.
3. According to Knox, this caste served those of higher caste than potters: 'The next are the Ruddaughs, Washers: Of these there are great Numbers. They wash Cloths for all People to the degree of a Potter; but for none below that degree.' Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 109.
4. See infra, p.374.
5. See infra, p.384.

in this art also[1]. Hence they were called to cast horoscopes of new-born children[2]. Further, members of this caste were employed to choose favourable times for commencement of all undertakings: 'There are among them astrologers whom they call Nangatas.....These all consult before making a journey about which they have a presentiment of any kind, as to the hour at which they should begin a war, fight a battle, sow a field, build a house, or any other transaction whatever; everything is done with their advice. These Nangatas are men of a low caste answering to our drummers.'[3] An astrologer was consulted as to the auspicious hour at which the ceremonies of rice-feeding and name-giving should be performed[4]. It was at an auspicious hour suggested by an astrologer that the child was ceremoniously initiated into the mysteries of the alphabet[5]. Further, when a girl came of age her parents employed an astrologer to fix the

1. See supra, p. 71.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 110. See also infra, pp. 113 ff.
3. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 143; See also Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 110.
4. See infra, p. 125.
5. See infra, p. 136.

auspicious day and hour for the ceremony of purification[1]. In the case of boys, an astrologer was consulted as to the auspicious hour at which the ceremony of shaving of the beard should be performed[2]. At marriage he was consulted as to whether the horoscopes of the potential mates agreed, and in the event of an agreement he fixed the auspicious day and hour for the final ceremony[3]. In short, the Sinhalese conducted every solemn activity in their everyday life with due astrological consideration[4]. And since the drummers were also the recognized astrologers, there is no doubt that even the higher castes were often forced to seek their help in this sphere too.

As in the case of the washerman and drummer, the barber too was given a low position in the social scale. Nevertheless, his assistance was necessary at a very important ceremony which signalled a boy's entry into a new stage in the life cycle. This was the ceremony of shaving of the beard. It was the barber who officiated at this ceremony[5], just as the washerwoman officiated at

1. See infra, p.157.
2. See infra, p.161.
3. See infra, pp.218, 219.
4. See John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 246, 247; Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 324.
5. See infra, p.161.

the puberty ceremony of girls.

Although artisans such as the goldsmith, the blacksmith and the potter had no ritualistic function, some of the articles which they produced were necessary for domestic as well as ritualistic use. Hence they too received an important place on ceremonial occasions. Likewise almost every caste made a certain contribution towards the community either in goods or in services[1]. Eventually this created a bond of social and economic indebtedness between the different caste groups. The fact that the caste system was founded mainly on occupational specialization made interdependence inevitable. The following observation made by Knox not only indicates the extent to which the principle of mutual obligation and interdependence was at work, but also suggests that some castes were in a bargaining position in relation to others, in view of the importance of the occupation in which they specialized: 'The ordinary work they do for them is mending their Tools, for which every Man pays to his Smith a certain Rate of Corn in Harvest time according to ancient

1. The widespread way of paying for these goods and services was in a certain quantity of grain at each harvest, according to the rate prescribed by tradition, for very little money circulated in the country. Thus when the blacksmith repaired the agricultural implements of the farmer, the latter gave a share to the former after the crops were harvested. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 108.

Custom. But if any hath work extraordinary, as making new Tools or the like, besides the aforesaid Rate of Corn he must pay him for it. In order to this, they come in an humble manner to the Smith with a Present, being Rice, Hens, and other sorts of Provision, or a Bottle of Rack, desiring him to appoint his time, when they shall come to have their work done. Which when he hath appointed them, they come at the set time, and bring both Coals and Iron with them. The Smith sits very gravely upon his Stool, his Anvil before him, with his left hand towards the Forge, and a little Hammer in his Right. They themselves who come with their work must blow the Bellows, and when the Iron is to be beaten with the great Maul, he holds it still sitting upon his Stool, and they must hammer it themselves, he only with his little Hammer knocking it sometimes into fashion. And if it be any thing to be filed, he makes them go themselves and grind it upon a Stone, that his labour of fileing may be the less; and when they have done it as well as they can, he goes over it again with his file and finisheth it.'[1] Thus it is seen that different castes often stood in need of one another's services. None could do without the others. The high castes were

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 108.

acutely conscious of this. This is probably the reason why some effort was sometimes made by them to behave with becoming modesty towards the inferior castes, despite the fact that the latter owed a traditional allegiance to the former. Queyroz indeed tells us that the higher castes often sought to satisfy the inferior castes with 'titles of honour'[1]. These were some conventional euphemistic terms of address sometimes used by the higher castes when addressing those who were on the lower rungs of the social ladder. For example, although the degrading epithet radava[2] was often used in reference to the washerman, on ceremonial occasions he was invariably addressed as hēnamāma, uncle-washer; while his wife was called ridīnanda, aunt-washer[3]. Similarly, the blacksmith

1. 'The other inferior castes they satisfy with titles of honour, and they give to the Chaleas the title of Deueaz, to the Barber Panicheaz, to the Padas Duriaz, to the Palaraz Ungiaz, and in this manner to the others.' Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 98. Denham observes: 'There are euphemistic titles in use amongst all castes. These alternative terms of address are usually honorifics or titles, and their use is a form of compliment to the person addressed, assuming that he is a chief amongst his own people, or that he holds an office or rank.' E.B. Denham, Ceylon at the Census of 1911, p.189.

2. Janavamsaya, Or. 6606 (180), Fol. 26; James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 93.

3. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 286; James de Alwis, 'Terms of Address and Modes of Salutation in Use Among the Sinhalese', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), 1856, III/10, p. 216.

(acāri) was designated gurunnāhe, teacher[1]; while the drummer (beravāya) was often styled näkati, astrologer[2]. The term panditaya, literally 'the wise one', was used in reference to the potter[3]. Members of almost all the other castes were often addressed in similar euphemistic terms. These terms of endearment may have strengthened the bonds which existed between different castes and facilitated the smooth working of the caste-ridden social system.

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1. Kalu kumaruta kiyana kavi, v. 67; E.B. Denham, Ceylon At the Census of 1911, p. 189.

2. James de Alwis, 'Terms of Address and Modes of Salutation in Use Among the Sinhalese', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), 1856, III/10, p. 216; Sivupada male, v. 37.

3. Janavamsaya, Or. 6606 (180), Fol. 23; E.B. Denham, Ceylon At the Census of 1911, p. 189.

Chapter III

Conception, Birth and Childhood

(a) Pregnancy

Evidence indicates that even the ordinary Sinhalese knew of the physiological origin of paternity and that birth was not considered a strange phenomenon. In the course of discussing the sins and temptations of household life, even the Sinhalese religious works often make casual references to the physiological processes relating to sex. For example, the Pūjāvaliya refers to different ways by which a woman could conceive.[1] These books were meant to be read aloud to the people, so that even an illiterate villager could learn their contents. Knox testifies to the fact that this practice prevailed in Kandyan times too.[2] This may have enabled the Sinhalese to acquire knowledge pertaining to certain aspects of sex life simultaneously with the acquiring of religious knowledge.

Furthermore, it is evident that the Sinhalese possessed a store of traditional knowledge concerning

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1. Pūjāvaliya, p. 399.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 119.

sterility, pregnancy, birth and allied subjects. There are also some folk-poems which sometimes refer specifically to sex matters. For example, the following verse from the Dēva anuhasa speaks of a married woman who showed signs of maternity:

> himiyā saha sätapennē
> baḍa daru gäb pihiṭannē
> gäba nisi lesa surakinnē
> daru nälavili langa ennē
>
> Having slept with (her) husband, a child is conceived in the womb and (she) protects the embryo well. She will be singing lullabies soon.[1]

In the following folksong, a young girl who has had premarital sexual relations with a young man and was found to be pregnant names the person who was responsible for it when taken to task by her mother:

> ätta kiyannam ammoi mam mevara
> dingirāla numba näti koṭa ei gedara
> bayen namut ävluni rāga gindara
> baḍa bara unē ēkai mavni sundara
>
> Mother, this time I will tell the truth. Dingirāla comes to (our) house whenever you are away. Although I was frightened, my heart burnt with the fire of passion. Dear mother,

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1. Dēva anuhasa, v. 21.

that is how my belly became heavy (with child).[1] These folksongs suggest that the process of conception was fully known even to village folks.[2]

In spite of the fact that the Sinhalese knew of the vital part played by the male in the procreation of children, it appears that they usually attributed childlessness to the malignant influences of gods, demons and spirits rather than to physical causes.[3]

If a woman did not give birth to a child after several years of marriage, her husband or a close relation approached an exorcist who found by various methods which god, demon or spirit was responsible for the barrenness and prescribed ways and means to cure it.[4]

If it was found that sterility was due to witchcraft, the exorcist set out to counteract that

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1. Jana kav kalamba, v. 8.

2. Uruga jātaka kāvyaya, a Sinhalese folk poem, mentions the difficulties a woman had to undergo 'from the day a sperm (daru biju) entered her womb'. v. 75.

3. Vanda pav katāva, v. 49.

4. Garba sānti pilivela, v. 8.

spell.[1] Vows of sacrifice were also made, especially to the gods, to secure their forbearance and help in this respect.[2]

While it was generally thought that a woman was subjected to the attacks of all sorts of demons and spirits in every stage of her life, it was during pregnancy that she was believed to be most susceptible to the direct influence of these unseen forces. The Kilidōsaya says that the demons would come after a pregnant woman like the leopards which come after a deer, and advises that

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1. It was sometimes believed that sterility was the result of a sin committed in a former life. If that was the case, the Sinhalese seem to have believed that there was little that even an exorcist could do in order to induce women to conceive. The following folksong depicts the sorrows of a barren woman who attributes her barrenness to the sins she had committed in her former lives:

   daru upatak gäna hitē tiyāgana kaḷa pidavili bulu kanda vagei
   palak nätē in pera pav okkoma meragala taramaṭa vädiya usai

   The offerings (I have) made with the intention of procuring a child were as big as the mount Bulu. But they were of no use, for the sins (I have) committed in (my) former lives are bigger than the mount Mahamēru. Jana kav kalamba, v. 15.

2. Hence, in spite of the fact that conception was known to result from sexual intercourse, a child born after making vows and offering to gods was often considered a gift from the gods. In the following verse from the Purāna kōlam kavipota a woman describes how the gods blessed her with a child after making the necessary offerings:

/continued on next page

pregnant women should take care not to visit certain places which were considered to be the favourite resorts of various demons (yakun lagina tän), especially during midday and at dusk (maddahan velāvei gomman velāvei).[1] According to the Madanālankāraya such places included graveyards, deserted houses and groves.[2]

The demons who were commonly held responsible for visiting barrenness, miscarriages and a wide range of afflictions upon women were Kaḷukumāra[3] and

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Footnote 2 continued from previous page.

edā siṭama vandava indā
pudā paṇduru devindu vändā
vadā ganṭa karapu vadā
vadā gatimi daru bilindā
From those days I was barren and I was worried about it. (So) I made offerings to gods and invoked their blessings. At last I gave birth to a child. v. 306.

In the Vanda pav katāva we come across a woman who describes how she conceived and later had an easy delivery after invoking the good wishes and blessings of gods. v. 80.

1. Kilidōsaya, vv. 5, 6.

2. Madanālankāraya, p. 12.

3. In the words of Hugh Nevill this demon 'afflicts women with dreams and diseases, causing emaciation and sterility'. Sinhala Verse (kavi) Part II p. 225.

Daḷakumāra,[1] and it was customary to take certain precautions to protect the expectant mother and the embryo against them. For this purpose special ceremonies were performed by exorcists.[2]

In addition to this, pregnant women were made to put on amulets (yantra) made by exorcists as a precaution to ensure that they were safe from the evil eye (äs vaha) and other deleterious influences which proceeded from human beings.[3]

The stoppage of a woman's menses for a period of two or three months was taken as symptomatic of conception. A reference in the Nikinikatāva indicates this:

> tun māseka hiṭa kili näta ada tek
> kiv dannā aya oya daru upatak
> She has not been unclean for the last three

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1. 'He appears in dreams, carrying children on his hip,... He visits women and falsely promises them children, and disguised as their husbands deceives them. He causes miscarriage, and difficult child-birth, and even afflicts new born children with fits, spasms, etc'. Hugh Nevill, Sinhala Verse (kavi), Part II, p. 274.

2. The ceremonies performed for the propitiation of Kalukumāra and Daḷakumāra were generally known as kaḷukumāra pidavilla and daḷakumāra pidavilla respectively. See also Kaḷukumara kavi, Or. 6615 (243) and Daḷakaḍavara doḷa kavi, Or. 6615 (71).

3. Kilidōsaya v. 7.

> months. Those who know about these matters said, 'this is a sure sign which indicates that she has conceived'.[1]

The outer symptoms of pregnancy have been well described in many Sinhalese literary works. According to the Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi the following signs indicated the onset of pregnancy in a woman:

> 'When the foetus began to grow in the womb like a lamp (pāna), (her) belly began to appear like a pot (kalē). Her hips which were formerly slim, became broad like caskets (karandu) ..... The nipples of her breasts became pale and large and she developed a desire to eat sour fruits like lemons, oranges and mangoes. She also ate little bits of gravel and clay'.[2]

The Daḷakumaru saha giridēvi upata[3] and the Vanda pav katāva[4] also contain similar descriptions.

The growing of the foetus from month to month, too, has been described in many Sinhalese literary works. For example, the Gäbautpattiya discusses the various stages from conception to birth, describing the condition of the child in the womb in each of the ten months through

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1. Nikini katāva, Or. 6611 (237), Fol. 7.
2. Purāna sinhala tovil kavi pp. 50, 58.
3. Daḷakumaru saha giridēvi upata, vv. 7-14.
4. Vanda pav katāva, vv. 50-55.

which pregnancy progressed.[1]

Once a woman's pregnancy was diagnosed through various signs, she was expected to observe certain precautionary restrictions and taboos for the protection of the embryo. A pregnant woman had to refrain from doing hard manual work.[2] However, she was not allowed to remain inactive and lazy, for it was considered that a certain amount of physical exercise would facilitate delivery. Therefore a pregnant woman did not usually abstain from the ordinary household duties, and according to Perera she even pounded rice with a pestle during this delicate period.[3]

There were also other observances that had to be attended to during pregnancy. The Madanālankāraya states that a woman in pregnancy should not deck herself in splendour and that she should refrain from painting her eyes with collyrium and wearing ornaments.[4]

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1. Gäba utpattiya, Or. 6612 (118) vv. 1-20.

2. sat masakaṭa äti daruvā pilisindilā
... gassā vei käpuvot pan vila bäsalā
If you go to the pond to gather rushes when the child in the womb is seven months old, that will cause an abortion. Pannankatura v. 6: See also the Ñātiprabēda-vistaraya p. 10.

3. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 1.

4. Madanālankāraya, p. 12.

Perhaps this was done to keep the expectant mother as unattractive as possible, so that she might not be attracted by demons like Kaḷukumāra and Daḷakumāra. A woman during her pregnancy also avoided looking at deformed persons or ugly images and pictures for fear the impression she got from them would influence the appearance of her offspring.[1]

In addition to the restrictions mentioned above, there were some important pre-natal precautionary food taboos which a pregnant woman had to follow.[2] For example, a woman in pregnancy was expected to abstain from taking certain kinds of foods, especially those that were regarded as 'heating' foods (giniyan kāma).[3] Stale and salty foods also had to be avoided.[4] In spite of these taboos, if a pregnant mother expressed a strong desire to eat any particular kind of food, it had to be provided, for it was considered most important that such desires be immediately satisfied for the better health of the mother and child in the womb. The

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1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 1.
2. Vanda pav katāva v. 52.
3. Kilidōsaya v. 8; Garbha cikitsāva, Or. 6612 (50), a treatise on midwifery belonging to the Kandyan period, gives a list of foods a pregnant woman had to avoid.
4. Madanālankāraya p. 12.

Madanālankāraya states that failure to satisfy a pre-natal longing during pregnancy would make the child a deformed person.[1] This longing for delicacies was known as dola duka, and usually it took the form of a strong desire to eat sour foods. The Vanda pav katāva describes how a woman during her pregnancy developed a voracious appetite to eat sour fruits,[2] and the Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi mentions a woman who longed to eat not only a variety of sour fruits such as lemons, oranges and mangoes, but also little bits of clay and gravel.[3] In the Kāpiri katāva we come across a woman who during her pregnancy expressed a desire to eat two varieties of ripe jack fruit (vāla and varaka) and sugar cane (uk daṇḍu), in addition to the sour fruits which most pregnant women seem to have relished.[4]

The Sinhalese considered that the child in the womb felt the need of nourishment as it grew, and expressed its desires through the mother. Hence they believed that the character of a person could be known by the desires his mother developed when he was in the

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1. Madanālankāraya, p. 14.
2. Vanda pav katāva v. 51.
3. Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, p. 58.
4. Kāpiri katāva v. 7.

womb. This appears to have been an old belief, for the Saddharmaratnāvaliya states that king Kāvantissa inquired from astrologers about the meaning of the longing his queen Vihāramahādēvi developed during her pregnancy.[1]

According to the Madanālankāraya, if a pregnant woman desired to partake some kind of food which was not difficult to procure, the child born to her would be lucky and virtuous. If on the other hand she longed to eat something which her husband could not provide, it was taken as an indication of the birth of an unlucky child who would become a curse even to its mother.[2]

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1. Saddharmaratnāvaliya p. 449.
2. Madanālankāraya p. 14.

(b) The Delivery

Among the Sinhalese it was the custom for a woman in pregnancy to go to her parental home for the first confinement. She usually left the conjugal home when she was well advanced in pregnancy,[1] and thereafter the burden of guarding her against real and fancied dangers mainly fell on the shoulders of her mother and other relatives.[2]

The delivery took place in a dark room set apart as the lying-in compartment.[3] This room was

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1. The Upadēsa mālaya advises a married woman not to think of visiting the parental home too frequently as 'a calf which often runs to its mother', but approves her going to the parental home 'when the belly is heavy with child'. v. 21.

2. Ñāti prabēda vistaraya, p. 12.

3. Some authorities hold that in some of the out of the way places like Bintänna the pregnant woman was lodged in a temporary shed for the delivery and that she was allowed to come out of it only after a period of nine days. K. Jinānanda, Apē sirit virit, p. 18; In John Callaway's Yakkun nattannawa and kolan nattannawa we come across a verse which refers to such a temporary shed. The kōlam poet puts the following words into the mouth of a pregnant woman: 'My husband will tarry in returning. Are these the pains of child-birth? At all events, pray to God. Make a shed where I may rest'. p. 57. However, it seems likely that the practice of building a temporary shed for the pregnant woman was confined to the remotest parts of the island, for the literary works do not give any evidence to this effect.

commonly known as timbiri gē, literally, dark house. It was customary to keep the delivery room dark, and even at present, a dark room is often sardonically compared to a timbiri gē. Kavminimaldama, a Sinhalese poem, refers to the birth of a child, who by its beauty dispelled even the darkness of the timbiri gē.[1] Though poetically expressed, we must understand from this statement that the delivery apartment in Kandyan times was a light-shunning room.

When the woman began to feel the pains of childbirth and signs of an impending delivery became visible, she was led to the delivery room. A rope was kept tied to the roof by the mat or bed side, for the woman to cling to when the labour pains became unbearable.[2] Since there were no professional midwives assistance was given by an experienced old woman: 'They have no Midwives, but the neighbouring good Women come in and do that Office'.[3] 'The Sinhalese women are not accustomed to have midwives, as do ours, to assist at births or give a helpful hand; but they take to them only the

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1. Kavminimaldama, v. 251.
2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

women of their neighbours, who serve as midwives'.[1]

In spite of the fact that the woman who was thus called in to attend to the delivery was not a person with any medical training, it appears that an easy delivery was often procured.

Heydt makes the following observation in this connection: 'They rarely die in childbirth, and such (a death) appears strange to them, from which one can deduce the ease of their bringing-forth'.[2]

However, delay in delivery was watched with anxiety. If, in spite of the efforts of the woman in attendance the child did not appear and the expectant mother was in prolonged labour, vows[3] were made repeatedly to various gods to facilitate delivery. Since the obstructions in the delivery were usually attributed to the evil influences of Kaḷukumāra, a special ceremony

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 136. This old woman who brought the wealth of her experience to the aid of the expectant mother was usually called vinnaæmbuva, Gäba utpattiya, Or. 6612 (118) v. 20, Vanda pav katava, vv. 83, 84. In reference to her, Kapiri katava uses the term vinnambu liya (v. 32), while the Purana kōlam kavipota prefers the name vinnambu mava (v. 307). The Daru vädīma, Or. 6611 (239) simply refers to her as 'the old woman (mähälī) who was called in'.

2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 136.

3. See infra pp. 298.

was held to propitiate him to procure an easy delivery. The following are two verses which were often recited by exorcists at this ceremony:

gat avasara piṭa vesamuni rajugen
kusa darugāb niti vanasā damamin
anganan daruvan tada leḍa karamin
siṭina ekaḷu kumarun amatami dän

mekata vetin dän ivataṭa yannē
yahatin daruvā piṭaṭa devannē
mavṭat daruṭat leḍa nokarannē
nisi puda häma vigasin salasannē

I now address Kaḷukumāra who, having obtained permission from king Vesamuni, destroys children in the womb and causes severe illnesses to women and children.

Leave this woman alone. Do thou bring the child out safely. Do not cause illnesses to the mother and child. We will make the necessary sacrifices without delay.[1]

There is an interesting poem known as Vilirujāva (labour toils)[2] which deals with the birth of the demon Kaḷukumāra and 'the great troubles and labour pains' of his mother at his birth. Hugh Nevill believes that this poem was 'probably written in order to be recited at ceremonies to alleviate difficult child-birth, by

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1. Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, vv. 34, 35.
2. Or. 6611 (238).

propitiation of Kaḷukumāra'.[1]

Since all gods and demons were considered to be far below the Buddha, in some of the incantations recited at ceremonies held in connection with difficult delivery, his name was often mentioned. For example, the Garbasāntiya contains incantations which refer to the birth of the prince Siddhārtha from the womb of queen Mahamāyā.[2] It was also customary to employ laymen to recite Angulimāla pirita until the child arrived.[3]

In addition to the above mentioned magical remedies, which were often resorted to when a woman was in prolonged labour, medical relief was also provided for her, for the Sinhalese considered that ailments were amenable not only to magic, but also to medicines. In fact, magic and medicine were so intimately connected in Kandyan times that they appear to have been almost

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1. Hugh Nevill, Sinhala Verse (kavi) Part I (p. 17).

2. Garba sāntiya, vv. 5, 6; Budugunamūlasāntiya, Or. 6604 (156) contains similar incantations. In the words of High Nevill this poem was 'intended as a charm to be recited by the exorciser ..... and substitutes the virtues of Budu for the usual invocation of spirits'. Sinhala Verse (kavi) Part I (p. 158 .

3. See Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, v. 37.

inseparable.[1] Various herbs, leaves and roots were used as medicine to bring relief to the pregnant woman who suffered from labour pain. Very often such a woman was given a mixture of juice of sugar cane and water of a young coconut mixed with gingely oil.[2] Presumably, some of these medical prescriptions were known to the woman who was called in to attend to the delivery.

As soon as the child was born, the woman who served as the midwife cut the umbilical cord leaving the last few inches attached to the navel. According to the Yōgadāranaya the part left attached to the child's body had to be eight inches (angulas) long:

upan viṭa kumaruvāgē pekani väla
kapan aṭangulak hära gäbaṭa nopäkila

When the baby is born, cut the umbilical cord

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1. This must have prompted Davy to state, '..... a Singhalese, to be an accomplished and scientific physician, should be an astrologer, that he may know what concern the stars have had in producing a disease, what are the best times for exhibiting medicines, and what are the most appropriate periods for culling simples.... He should be an adept in interpreting dreams, that he may anticipate the future relative to the fate of his patient, form a correct prognosis, and avail himself of any hints the gods may be pleased to send through this obscure channel', An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 250.

2. Yōgadāranaya, v. 17.

without any hesitation leaving eight angulas to the navel.[1]

After the cord was cut, the child was bathed in a clay vessel (koraha) and the water used was poured away at the foot of a young tree.[2]

Next, the rite of rankiri katagāma, literally, the application of gold and milk on the mouth, was performed, when a bit of human milk with a little gold rubbed in it was applied on the child's mouth.[3] This was supposed to be an invocation to Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning. Yōgadāranaya says that if the rite of the application of gold and milk on the mouth was performed on a child at the right moment, when grown up, its wisdom would be like that of the god Suraguru.[4]

The Sinhalese attached a great importance to astrology, and it was the custom to cast a horoscope when a child was born. For this purpose the exact time of birth was noted and an astrologer was employed to cast the horoscope: 'The first object of parents on the birth of a child, is to have his nativity cast and

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1. Yōgadāranaya, v. 45.
2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 1.
3. Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota, v. 309; Vanda pav katāva, v. 84.
4. Yōgadāranaya, v. 46.

his horoscope made out'.[1]

For the first few days the mother was kept on a very sparing diet. Usually she was fed on a hot curry termed miris hodda, literally, chilly-gravy, consisting mostly of the drugs goraka,[2] pepper and ginger. Knox gives us evidence of this practice when he states: 'The ordinary Caudle for Women in Child-bed, is Goraca boyled in water with Pepper and Ginger. Women in that condition use nothing else'.[3]

After child birth the woman and child were not left alone for a few days for fear of being attacked by malevolent spirits.[4] An areca-cutter (girē) or some other iron weapon was kept close to them, because it was believed this gave them protection against

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 246. Knox makes the following observation in this connection, 'As soon as the Child is born, the Father or some Friend apply themselves to an Astrologer to enquire, whether the Child be born in a prosperous Planet, and a good hour or in an evil', An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

2. 'This Goraca is a fruit round like an Apple marked with divers creases along the sides of it. Being ripe it is within and without red like blood, but sower.... Two or three of these will give a pleasant sower relish unto a large vessel of any liquid thing'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 183.

3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 183.

4. Kilidōsaya, v. 10.

spirits.[1]

It appears that after child-birth a woman was considered to be in a state of pollusion (kili) for fourteen days.[2] The following verse from the Kilidōsaya speaks of the taboos a woman had to observe during her period of defilement.

> vädū kille häṭi numba dän ahapannē
> iū batut kisi ayekut noṇa kannē
> dēvālayaṭa veheraṭa nogohin innē
> vädū landage kili nē häṭi dänagannē
> Now you will hear about the pollution caused by child-birth. Know that even the rice cooked (by a woman in that state) will not be eaten by any one. (Such a woman) will have to refrain from going to the dēvālē or vihāra. Know that these are the taboos which have to be observed by a woman after child-birth.[3]

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1. Kilidōsaya, v. 12; The Girē upata (the origin of the areca-cutter), Or. 6615 (248), describes the manner in which the god Visvakarma made the areca-cutter with iron smelted from Mt. Mahāmēru, thus giving it a special power to ward off evil spirits.

2. Ibid., v. 13: According to some authorities a woman after child-birth was in a state of defilement for a period of one month. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 12.

3. Kilidōsaya, v. 11.

Although this verse is in a much condensed form, it illustrates the fact that a woman after child-birth in Kandyan times was regarded as unclean for some days and was not allowed to cook or approach a place of worship during that period.[1] She had to wash her clothes and take a bath before being considered ceremonially purified. Usually the purificatory bath was taken after a period of fourteen days.[2] After the purification an

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1. There is no doubt that menstruating women were also similarly regarded as ceremonially unclean for a certain period. Indeed, from a statement of Knox it may be understood that the taboo connected with menstruation was very strictly enforced: 'So long as the Women have their Infirmities or Flowers upon them, they are accounted very unclean, insomuch that the very house is polluted in that degree that none will approach near it. And even she her self cares not to conceal it, but calls out to them that come near, that they may avoid her house. But after she hath washed her Head and Body all is purified again'. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150. The Kilidōsaya testifies to the fact that a woman after child-birth was not considered to be in such a grave state of defilement.

2. Kilidōsaya, v. 13. Needless to say, this purificatory bath at the end of the supposed period of defilement was only taken when the mother was fit enough to do so. However, it appears that the Sinhalese woman passed the crisis of child-birth without great effort and quickly resumed her normal position in the family. We may note here the observation of Heydt: 'It is surprising', he says 'how quickly those who give birth are well again (and certainly it is not so among us) especially when one observes the poor food that they eat'. Ceylon, p. 136.

auspicious day was chosen by an astrologer for the woman to take the child to the dēvālē or vihāra to fulfil the vows she had taken during her pregnancy.[1] This was considered a day of rejoicing, and it was customary to entertain the friends and relations at a feast, at the end of which the guests presented the child with ornaments, clothes and other things.[2] It was on this day that the child was brought out of the house into the open for the first time in its life. Hence this ceremony was called doraṭa vāḍīma, literally, taking out of the house.[3]

If the child was a girl, her ears were pierced on the tenth or twelfth day after her birth.[4] A gold needle was used for this purpose;[5] and when the pain abated a thin piece of talipot leaf was inserted into each hole to widen it.

When the child was about six months old, its

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1. Kilidōsaya, v. 14.
2. Ñāti prabōda vistaraya, p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 12: See also Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 1; It appears that in Kandyan times this ceremony was sometimes called hiru vāḍīma, literally, exposure to the sun. See Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, pp. 60, 71.
4. Muhūrttacintāmani, v. 99.
5. See Apē sirit virit, p. 24.

hair was cut for the first time by the mother.[1] A little of the hair was preserved,[2] and the rest was taken to a stream and cast into the water.[3]

The above-mentioned ceremonies were also performed on an auspicious day fixed in consultation with the astrologer; but they do not appear to have been very elaborate. It also seems that there was no definite date for performing them.[4]

It is noteworthy that even after the termination of the period of pollution, the mother was kept on a somewhat strict diet. This was done especially for the safety of the child who was fed exclusively on its mother's milk for the first seven months. At the age of seven months, the bat kavana mangula, literally, rice-feeding ceremony, was held when the child was fed with a tiny ball of rice and given its name.[5] It appears,

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1. Ñāti prabēda vistaraya, p. 13.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 1.

3. See Apē sirit virit, p. 24.

4. For instance, although the ear-piercing ceremony was usually performed on the tenth or twelfth day after birth, it appears that it was sometimes put off to a more convenient day. The Muhūrttacintāmani says that the ear-piercing ceremony could be performed even in the sixth, seventh, or eighth month after birth. v. 99.

5. See infra, pp. 120ff.

however, that the child was sometimes continued to be suckled until it was a few years old.[1]

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1. 'Mothers almost universally suckle their own children, and for the long period of four or five years, either in part or entirely'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 288.

(c) The Rice Feeding Ceremony and Name-Giving

It is clear that during the earlier periods, the ceremony of feeding the child with rice for the first time, bat kavana mangula,[1] was distinct from the ceremony of name-giving, nan tabana mangula. The Pūjāvaliya mentions an occasion when the naming was done five days after the birth of a child.[2] The Saddharmaratnāvaliya refers to an instance when the name-giving ceremony was performed on the very day the child was born.[3] However, all available evidence unmistakably points to the conclusion that in Kandyan times the above ceremonies were observed together on the same day in the seventh month after the birth of a child. Callaway gives evidence to this effect when he states: 'The natives usually wean their children at

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1. Sinhalese literary works use different terms to denote this ceremony. Describing the various ceremonies which were performed at the commencement of each successive stage in the life of a person, the Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi refers to the rice feeding ceremony as batdīma, (p. 48), batkävīma, (p. 58) and mevädīma (pp. 66, 71). The Pandinaḷuva, Or. 6615 (162), (Fol. 7, v. II) also uses the term mevädīma in reference to the rice feeding ceremony, while the Ganaruva, Or. 6615 (161), (Fol. 2, v. II), calls it batmevädīma. At present it is usually termed indulkaṭagäma or batkävīma.

2. Pūjāvaliya, p. 141.

3. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 421.

the age of seven months, and on that occasion have a feast, and give the infant a name. On asking a child's name, they will say, it has none, not having eaten rice![1]

Davy and Turnour both give us accounts of these two ceremonies which further help us to establish that they were performed together on the same day: 'Children are generally named when they commence eating rice.... At a fortunate day, that has been calculated, the relations and friends of the family assemble; and, at a fortunate hour, the grandfather, or, should both grandfathers be dead, the father, takes a little rice in his fingers, puts it into the child's mouth, and at the same time gives it its name'.[2] 'The Rice-feast is so called from its being the first instance in which rice is placed in the mouth of an infant; and on this occasion the individual name is conferred on the child'.[3]

Apart from these accounts, Sinhalese literary works too make it abundantly clear that it was usual with the Sinhalese to give the child its name on the

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1. John Callaway, Yakkun Nattannawā and Kōlan Nattannawā, p. 22.

2. John Davy, An Account of The Interior of Ceylon, p. 288.

3. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 324.

occasion on which it first partook of solid food. For example, the Kavminimaldama speaks of a child who was given its name immediately after it was ceremonially fed with rice:

> naha bā okumaruṭa
> bat dona dinehi näkataṭa
> tama navpiya namaṭa
> täbū sōnaka kumaru yai tuṭa
>
> On the day that fortunate prince was given rice at an auspicious hour, his parents gave him the name Sōnaka.[1]

The Ganaruva not only shows that the naming was done on the occasion on which a child was given rice for the first time, but also indicates that these ceremonies were observed in the seventh month after birth.

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1. Kavminimaldama, v. 271: There is yet another verse in the Kavminimaldama which mentions an instance when the naming was done on the occasion of the feeding of the child.

> bat kavā lapemina
> arindama kumaruya yana
> nama tabā satosina
> sitängisē ätikaḷō yahatina
>
> After the child had been fed with rice, it was given the name Arindama, and brought up amidst comforts. Kavminimaldama, v. 269.

pirunen esat masa
guru dina udayō yasa
bat mē vaḍā yasa
kumaru gajabā nam kaḷō tosa

When the prince was seven months old, at an auspicious hour which fell on the morning of a Thursday, it was fed with rice and given the name Gajabā.[1]

In addition to this evidence, Callaway gives us a translation of two Sinhalese verses which prove beyond doubt that the rites of feeding and naming were combined at the rice feeding ceremony and that it took place when the child was seven months old: 'Seven months after the birth of the child, they gave it food; and named it 'the Great Black God'.[2] 'He was conceived in the pure womb of Karandoo Bānā; and was born with influence and power after the expiration of ten months. Having discovered a lucky time, they gave him food in the seventh month. From thence the name of the great prince

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1. Or. 6615 (161), Fol. 2, v. II.

2. John Callaway, Yakkun Naṭṭannawā And Kōlan Nattannawā, p. 1.

was 'the Great Black God'.[1]

Unquestionably these verses were meant to be recited at the ceremonies performed to invoke the 'Great Black God'. However, it is absolutely clear that the material contained in them is true of life in Kandyan times.

In the face of the foregoing facts it would not be unreasonable to assert that the ceremony of feeding a child with rice for the first time and the ceremony of name-giving were observed together on the same day in the seventh month after its birth.

We shall now consider the full constituents of the Sinhalese rice-feeding and name-giving ceremonies. It was the village astrologer who chose favourable times for the commencement of all undertakings; and the

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1. John Callaway, Yakkun Nattannawā And Kōlan Nattannawā, p. 2; Callaway does not give us the originals of these verses. However, the Purāna sinhala tovil kavi contains two verses which correspond to this translation:

ē vinana väḍa vun
karaṇḍubānā bisaun
kusa pilisinda utun
bihiva dasa nasa pirī kumarun

sat nasakin itā
kumaruṇḍa bat devatā
nan parasinduvetā
tibū nan maha kalu dēvatā
vv. 187, 188.

ceremonies of rice-feeding and name-giving formed no exception to this rule. In reference to them Turnour observes: 'The time appointed for the observance of this ceremony, as well as of the most trifling acts of ordinary life ... must depend on the dictation of an astrologer'.[1]

After reading the almanac (lita) and calculating the position of the stars under which the child was born, the astrologer fixed an auspicious day and hour (näkata) for the performance of the above ceremonies. It was also the duty of the astrologer to find out with what letter the name of the child should begin, for it was considered most important that the name of the child be appropriate to the constellation under which it was born: 'The selection of the name also rests with the astrologer, in which he is guided by certain rules. From the terms by which the ruling planet of that moment is defined he has to take three initial consonants with their inherent vowels, for in chaste Cingalese, as in

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1. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 325. In this connection Denham makes the following observation : 'This ceremony took place on a day carefully chosen by the astrologer..... but the date depended on the horoscope of the child'. Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 181.

Pali, a scrupulous regard is paid to euphony; and these three initials are required to form a dactyle'.[1]

On the date of the ceremony being fixed, friends and relations of the family were invited to be present, and it was customary for them to arrive with presents for the child.[2] On the day the ceremony took place, a piece of cloth was spread on the floor, and on it was laid a banana leaf.[3]

On this leaf were placed some rice prepared

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1. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 325: Denham's discussion of the subject runs as follows: 'The greatest care is taken in the selection of the nme. It is chosen according to the nekata, or constellation under which the child is born, and by taking certain characters of the alphabet assigned for the asterism occupied by the moon at the time of the child's birth. The name is formed out of a selection of these characters, in accordance with the sound composing a foot called gana (formed by trisyllables), so to accord with the nekata'. Ceylon At The Census of 1911, p. 182: These ganas are described in Heladivabidanavata, vv. 285, 286.

2. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 325.

3. Ibid. p. 325: According to K. Jinānanda, sometimes lotus leaves were used for this purpose, Apē sirit virit, p. 25.

by the mother of the child,[1] a few coins, and various kinds of eatables.[2] The guests then deposited near the leaf the presents they had brought for the child.[3] A lighted brass lamp was also kept close the the banana leaf.[4]

At the auspicious hour, the child 'arrayed for the first time in the best clothing allowed to its

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1. 'For this occasion the mother of the infant receives a measure of fine paddy, which she beats into rice with her own hands, and cooks herself. Among families of the first rank, as they are unaccustomed to such exertion, the mother holds the child on her left arm, while she drops the rice pounder seven times on the grain in the mortar.' - George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 324. Denham records that 'paddy used for this ceremony must have been in the house at least a day more than the age of the child'. Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 181.

2. Denham states that rice cakes, curd, honey, and fruits were placed on the leaf on which the child's rice was put. Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 181.

3. George Turnour, Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming a Child, in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 325.

4. K. Jinānanda, Apē sirit virit, p. 25.

rank;[1] was placed by its mother among the presents and victuals prepared for it, and was allowed to choose anything it liked.[2] What the child touched was observed with anxiety, for it was believed that the article the child selected at the rice feeding indicated the good or the evil that was to befall it in the future. Milk-rice (kiribat) was considered to be the most fortunate choice it could make.[3]

Next, the grandfather or the father approached and sat down facing the child. It was by him that the child was ceremoniously fed and named: '.... the grand-father, or, should both grandfathers be dead, the father,

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1. According to the Muhūrttacintāmani the child had to be bathed and adorned with scented paste and ornaments before the ceremony began, v. 426: In this connection Denham states that a sanctified cord, to which rings were fastened 'according to the number of months of the child's age, made of an alloy of five metals - gold, silver, brass, copper, and iron' was tied round the child's waist to guard him from evil spirits. To 'furnish further protection against evil influences', he says, a chain with a pendant, called panchāyudaya, was put on his neck, and bangles were fastened round the child's arms and ankles. Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 182.

2. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 325: Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses Of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

3. Ibid. p. 2; E.B. Denham, Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 182.

takes a little rice in his fingers, puts it into the child's mouth, and at the same time gives it its name'.[1] After the ceremony, commenced the feast at which the guests were served with the best the host could afford, on pieces of fresh plantain leaves.[2]

The name thus given on the occasion on which the child was fed with rice for the first time was called batnama, literally 'rice name'.[3]

However, it is clear that almost invariably a second name was given to a person later on and that he was ordinarily called by that other name. It will be profitable here to quote Knox's discussion of the subject: 'In their Infancy they have Names, whereby one may be called and distinguished from the other. But when they come to years it is an affront and shame to them either

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1. John Davy, An Account Of The Interior Of Ceylon, p. 288: However, according to Turnour, the feeding was done by the mother while the father approached and whispered the name in the child's ear. - 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child' in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 326. Denham disagrees with both Davy and Turnour when he says that the maternal uncle or a close relative gave the child milk-rice, and at the same time whispered the name selected into its ear. Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 182.

2. John Davy, An Account Of The Interior Of Ceylon, p. 288.

3. Ibid., p. 288.

Men or Women, to be called by those Names. Which they say is to be like unto Dogs. Then they change their Names into Titles according to the Town wherein they were born or do dwell. Also they have other Names, which may be compared to Coats of Arms, properly and only belonging to that Family: by which likewise they are called'.[1]

Knox's account is entirely corroborated by other authorities. 'The 'rice-name' is used only in infancy. The Singalese being without family names, grown-up people are called either by the names of the places of their abode, or of the offices which they fill', says Davy.[2] In this connection Denham observes that in the 'Up-country members of the chief family of a village and their descendants adopted the name of the village as their surname, and affixed it to their personal names' and that 'this practice gave rise to such surnames as Dunuvila, Ehelapola, Madugalla, and Ratwatta, which are really territorial names'.[3]

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 151.

2. John Davy, An Account Of The Interior Of Ceylon, pp. 288, 289.

3. E.B. Denham, Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 184. See also E. Reimers, 'Some Sinhalese Names and Surnames', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1930, XXXI/83, pp. 437-452.

Thus it seems that there were some ideas of disrespect associated with the utterance of personal names. Since in Kandyan times the caste system was well established[1] it may be that these ideas were, to some extent, associated with caste sentiments. Even in the present enlightened age, a Sinhalese who belongs to a higher caste would probably feel uncomfortable if a person who belongs to a caste considered low in the social scale were to address him by his personal name. Such being the position, it is not unreasonable to suggest that in Kandyan times, the people of rank who did not wish to allow their names to be in everyone's mouth, preferred to adopt titles and names of villages as their personal names.

The records of Kandyan period also testify to the fact that it was customary to call children by pet names which often referred to some physical peculiarity or the position in the family.[2] 'As the child grows up', says Turnour, 'some other names is fixed upon, referring generally to the order in which he was born, or to his complexion, - as Loku, big; Maduma,

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1. See Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105.

2. See E.B. Denham, Ceylon At The Census Of 1911, p. 183.

middle; Punchy, little; Ratu, red; Kalu, black'.[1]

It is likely that even the grown-ups continued to use the pet names thus given, in preference to the names they received on the occasion on which they were first fed with rice (batnana), because of the fear that some vicious person would work mischief through those names, for it is known that for the performance of a certain class of black magic, the magician had to know his victim's correct name, which he wrote on charmed metal plates or palm leaves.[2] It may, therefore, be conjectured that some Sinhalese considered it safe to keep their real names secret so that no magician could use them to cause them any sickness or other harm by setting some evil power in motion. In fact, according to Turnour the name given to a child at the rice-feeding

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1. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, p. 326. It appears that even the Veddas used pet names or nicknames in conversing among themselves. When 'interrogated on the subject', a Vedda is supposed to have said, 'I am called a man: when young, I was called the little man: and when old, I shall be called the old man'. John Davy, An Account Of The Interior Of Ceylon, p. 117.

2. See John D'Oyly, Sketch Of The Constitution Of The Kandyan Kingdon, p. 53, L.D. Barnett, Alphabetical Guide to Sinhalese Folklore, p. 79.

ceremony was kept so secret that it was known only to the astologer and the father of the child.[1]

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1. George Turnour, 'Ceremonies At The Festival Of Naming A Child', in Major Forbes's Eleven Years In Ceylon, p. 326.

(d) The Ceremony of Initiation into Learning and the Period of Studentship

It is remarkable that in spite of the unsettled conditions of the times, the knowledge of reading and writing was widespread amongst the Sinhalese. Cordiner, Davy and other writers tell us that the percentage of literacy was fairly high amongst the male population. In 1807 Cordiner found that the 'greater part of the men can read and write'.[1] Writing in 1821, Davy observes: 'Reading and writing are far from uncommon acquirements, and are almost as general as in England amongst the male part of the population, to whom they are chiefly confined'.[2]

Knighton asserts that 'it is rare indeed to see a Ceylonese, even of the poorest class, who cannot read and write his own language'.[3] Seeing that such

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1. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 120.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 237.

3. William Knighton, The History of Ceylon, p. 178.

importance was attached to literacy,[1] it is not surprising to find that the Sinhalese regarded the ceremony at which the child was initiated into the mysteries of the alphabet, atapot tabana mañgula, as one of the most important ceremonies held in connection with children.

A child reaching the age of five appears to have been considered fit for the beginning of education. According to the Muhurttacintāmini, the education of the child ought to commence before the fifth year is passed.[2] The Saddharmālankāraya also bears evidence of the fact that the fifth year was the time prescribed for it.[3] We may, therefore, say that the Sinhalese

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1. The Lōkōpakāraya asserts that 'the most precious wealth that parents can leave for their children is education that makes them shine among intellectuals':

   degurun visin tana
   daruvanaṭa dena nomada dana nam
   viyatun sabā mäda
   idiriyē induvana silpamäi, v. 10:

   Emphasising the value of education, the author of the Kavminimaldama states that it is the greatest wealth in the world because it cannot be stolen by anybody, v. 280.

2. Muhūrtta cintāmani, v. 445.

3. Saddharmālankāraya, p. 436.

child started the study of the alphabet at about the age of five.

It was at an auspicious hour that the child was ceremoniously initiated into learning,[1] for as has already been shown, it was the custom in Kandyan times to conduct solemn activities with due astrological consideration.

A few days before the ceremony the house was cleaned and plastered with cow-dung,[2] and decorated with various figures and designs.[3] A platform was also erected in a conspicuous part of the house, and it was on this that various kinds of foods were placed as offerings to Ganēsa, the God of Wisdom.[4]

On the day of the ceremony, the child, bathed and neatly dressed,[5] was taken to the village temple (pansala) to be initiated into learning. It may be noticed in passing, that in Kandyan times 'the education for boys was carried on by Buddhist priests at the

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1. Muhūrtta cintāmini, v. 445.
2. See Vadan kavi pota, v. 39.
3. See Ganadevi hālla, vv. 13-15.
4. Vadan kavi pota, vv. 36-39: See also, Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.
5. Muhūrttacintāmani, v. 460.

village pansala, the home of the incumbent of the nearest vihāra, just as the village priest taught at the church door in mediæval England'.[1]

The ceremony opened with offerings to Ganēsa.[2] Other gods were next propitiated with similar offerings.[3] It was considered that the intellectual attainments of a child could only be secured by the good will of these deities. The worship of the deities was followed by the ceremony of washing the feet of the teacher,[4] which signified the child's willingness to hold its teacher in deep reverence. Next, the child offered its teacher a cluster of betel leaves and camphor (kapuru),[5] and sought to be recognised as one of his pupils. It is evident that suitable presents (däkum) also had to be made to the teacher.[6]

At the auspicious hour, 'the teacher took his

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1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediæval Sinhalese Art, p. 49: See also, H. Gunatillaka, Kavtuka sangrahaya, Vol. III, p. 8.

2. See Vadan kavi pota, vv. 35-51.

3. Ibid, vv. 52-71.

4. Ganadevi hälla, v. 33, Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

5. Ibid., v. 34.

6. Ibid., v. 35: Muhūrttacintāmani, v. 460.

seat and recited the first line of vowels, beginning with the words svasti siddham, 'let prosperity attend''.[1] And as the child repeated these after its teacher, a husked coconut was cut in two as an invocation to Ganēsa.[2]

The child read and repeated the letters of the Sinhalese alphabet (hōḍiya)[3] with the teacher using the auxiliary yanu along with the letters, to make pronunciation easy and distinct, 'thus vowels were read as Ayanu-Āyanu-Iyanu-Īyanu and consonants as Kayanu-Kāyanu and so on'.[4]

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1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediæval Sinhalese Art, p. 49: See also H. Gunatillaka, Kavtuka sangrahaya, Vol. III, p. 8: It was believed that 'Säkra, Visnu, and Isvara together invented the word Svasti prefixed to the alphabet in the phrase Svasti Siddham'. L.D. Barnett, Alphabetical Guide to Sinhalese Folklore, p. 3.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

3. 'The letters of the Singhalese alphabet are classed and enunciated after the model presented by the Dēwa-nāgara, the vowels appearing first, and then, in order, the guttural, palatal, lingual, dental, and labial consonants. They are fifty in number, though not all in common use, and present a perfection not seen in the modern alphabets of Europe, as each letter has one uniform and definite sound'.: R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, pp. 313-314.

4. I. Pannatissa, 'Secular Education in the Pirivena Schools, Ceylon Historical Journal, 1951, Vol. I, p. 39.

Selkirk also records that in 'repeating... vowels or consonants, the word 'yanu' is added to each; as 'a yanu', 'ā yanu'; 'i yanu', 'ī yanu', and so on'.[1] Having thus been ceremoniously initiated into learning, the child was taken back home. The ceremony then came to an end with a feast to the friends and relations. Thereafter the child went to the temple daily[2] to learn at the feet of its teacher.

It is noteworthy that according to the Sinhalese principles of education reading came before writing.[3] The instruction was individual,[4] and the child repeated the letters of the alphabet together with the teacher. This process was continued till the child no longer needed the teacher to guide him. The child was not considered as qualified to be taught anything new 'until

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1. J. Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p. 121.

2. It is noteworthy that since the system of teaching was individual, the children did not go to school at the same hour of the day. 'The children do not all attend at the same period of the day; as they have leisure, they go to the pansal, repeat their lesson, and then return home, or go to their employment in some other place'. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 313.

3. Ganadevi hälla, vv. 36-37.

4. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 120.

the alphabet could be repeated without fault or hesitation'.[1] Pannatissa thinks that the child was able to do this before it reached its sixth year.[2] It is interesting to compare this view with that taken by Hardy: 'From the number of the letters, the learning of the Singhalese alphabet is rather a formidable undertaking, and the child is many weeks and, sometimes, years, before he accomplishes this task; his improvement of course depending in part upon his own diligence, or the attention of the priest'.[3]

It is probable that the pupil had to spend a considerable time over the task of mastering the sounds of phonetically classified vowels and consonants. Since great importance was attached to proper accent and intonation, and the student was expected to repeat the letters exactly in the way the teacher did, it is quite conceivable that the child had to spend a considerable time on learning the alphabet.

When the child had mastered the alphabet it was taught to form letters on the sand board (välipila),

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1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediæval Sinhalese Art, p. 49.

2. I. Pannatissa, 'Secular Education in the Pirivena Schools', Ceylon Historical Journal, 1951, Vol. I, p. 40.

3. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 314.

with its fingers. This process was known as pillan kīma.[1] In this connection Hardy observes: 'After mastering the alphabet, the child writes the letters in sand, repeating the pillan as his finger traces the letters. In the left hand he holds a piece of wood, with which he erases the letter when its name and power has been pronounced, and an even surface is presented for the formation of the next letter'.[2]

In the course of describing the traditional method of teaching the young to read and write, the Vadankavipota refers to these conventional stages of instruction:

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1. Ganadevi hālla, v. 36.

2. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 315. In reference to this process Coomaraswamy states: '... the teacher had a carved ivory style (velipata) with which he traced the sign sva, after which he guided the boy's hand in copying: the boy wrote with his middle finger, supported by the fore-finger and thumb: in this way, little by little, the boy learnt to write the whole alphabet'. Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 49: The Sangharāja sādhu cariyava, a work belonging to the Kandyan period, refers to the practice of writing on a bed, the surface of which was spread with sand, ändaval valaṭa väli aturā ... uganna ayaṭa vällē boho se liyavanavaya, p. 9: In this connexion Knox makes the following observation: 'They learn to write upon Sand, spreading it upon the ground, and making it smooth with the hand, and so write the letters with their fingers to bring their hand in use', An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 175; See also, James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 259.

sōḍiya paṭan gena vana pot karava dänā
pillam kiyā al pil akuru däna genā
liyā akuru väla lē geḍi nokā dänā...

(First) learn the letters of the alphabet by heart. (Next) read pillam and learn the hal and pil letters. (Then) proceed to write the letters in sand, without mischief and avoiding blows.[1]

In the next stage, the sand board was replaced by a strip of palm or talipot leaf,[2] on which the teacher wrote large letters. The child then traced the letters with a blunt writing style called ulkaṭuva. This was repeated over and over again on the same strip of leaf till it was cut through. This process was known as saṭahan käpīma.[3] Afterwards the child was taught to copy instead of tracing the letters written by the teacher, guru akuru. In the final stage the child was given a sharp style, panhinda, with which it wrote

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1. Vadan kavi pota, v. 27.

2. 'They write not on Paper, for of that they have little or none; but on a Talli-pot leaf with an Iron Bodkin, which makes an impression'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 175.

3. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 49: See also, Heladivpuvata, p. 145.

on prepared talipot leaves, puskola.[1]

When the teacher was satisfied that the child could write the alphabet and read short sentences, it was introduced to a book called Nampota or name-book,[2] which 'contains a collection of the names of villages, countries, temples, dagobas, dewalas, islands, caves, and c'.[3] This was followed by the Magul lakuna,[4] an enumeration of the various auspicious signs and beauties upon the person of Buddha.[5] Next came the Ganadevihālla, which contains an account of the birth of Ganēsa, the God of Wisdom. Hugh Nevill states that this book formed

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1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 49: 'Those more advanced write, or engrave, with a stylus, or piece of pointed steel fixed in a brass handle, on slips of talipot or palmyra leaves, which are thicker than parchment, and of a nature no less durable. When the writing is finished, they sometimes rub over the leaf with a black juice, which fills up the characters, making them look bright and beautiful'. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 259.

2. Ganadevi hālla, vv. 36-37.

3. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 315.: 'The first book read and learnt after the alphabet was the Nampota, a list of important places and temples, practically an elementary geography of Ceylon', Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 50.

4. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 315.

5. Ibid.

the 'third section in the regular course of reading'.[1] The child was then given the Vadankavipota, which contains stanzas in honour of Buddha, and also an analysis of the Sinhalese alphabet.[2] The child next read the Buddha-gajjaya, another work composed in praise of Buddha, followed by the Sakaskada, which is 'prose with difficult combinations of words'.[3] After these came a series of books, which were mostly written in Sanskrit.[4]

This appears to have been the complete curriculum for a Sinhalese child, unless it was intended for the priesthood or for a learned profession such as medicine. ~~It~~ However, it is likely that a majority of children did not complete even this course, because only a few could 'command the time requisite for passing through the entire course'.[5] A statement of Heydt, too, suggests that a youth who had no literary ambition did not pursue his education beyond the primary stage: '... when anyone can read and write, he is in their opinion learned enough.

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1. Sinhala verse (kavi), Part I, p. 2.
2. Heladiv puvata, p. 143.
3. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 50.
4. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, pp. 315-317; Sangarāja sādhu cariyava, p. 6.
5. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 318.

Yet there are some among them, who give themselves more airs than the rest'.[1]

A characteristic feature of the Sinhalese system of education in Kandyan times was that the young student often had to spend a good deal of his time in the laborious task of learning the lessons by heart, vanapotkaranavā,[2] sometimes repeating them word for word after the teacher. In the words of High Nevill, the 'sense is not explained at all, the reading being confined to pronouncing the letters'.[3] However, learning by rote was not the only method followed in Kandyan times. Although memory played an important part it is clear that when teaching a subject such as grammar doubtful points were often expounded with the help of examples. For instance Sangharāja sādhu cariyāva tells us that Saranankara Thēra taught various books on grammar explaining obscure passages 'with the help of many examples'.[4] Moratota vata refers to Moratota Dhammakkandha as a person who had a remarkable ability to explain knotty

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 126.
2. Vadan kavi pota, v. 27.
3. Sinhala verse (kavi), Part I, p. 2.
4. Sangharāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 10.

points with ease.[1]

It is also clear that in Kandyan times students were often subjected to a rigid discipline, which was maintained by a constant use of the rod. Vadankavipota shows how corporal punishments were resorted to as a mode of correction.

> äsē kandulu akuraṭa giya kalaṭa gatē
> basē niyuru tepalati deguru savanatē
> kasē sāniti vēvāl iraṭu gena atē
> dasē pasē gedi deti piṭaṭa ekaratē
>
> pol iraṭē ana tada kara gatinnā
> in ola nola kanakaṭa sita noyannā
> dān nisalava inda akurut kiyannā
> in apa danga gēka lūdāya annā

When at school the teacher beats me with whips and canes, and when tears fall from my eyes, parents try to console me whispering kind words to my ears. Yet the teacher continues to give blows on my back mercilessly.

The teacher maintains discipline by a severe use of the coconut ekel. Therefore I refrain from doing any mischief, and read my lessons quietly. But I feel as if my mother has put me in a prison.[2]

These verses not only bear witness to the agony

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1. Moraṭoṭavata, v. 46.

2. Vadan kavi pota, vv. 30, 32.

of a naughty or truant Sinhalese youth, but also suggest that the period of studentship was considered as a time of rigorous discipline. However, we need not suppose that cordial relations did not exist between the teacher and the student. As has already been said, it was customary for the student to wash his teacher's feet at the ceremony of initiation into learning, thus signifying the student's agreement to hold his teacher in deep reverence. It is evident that in practice the student behaved in conformity with this pledge, even performing menial services like fetching water and sweeping the place for the teacher: '... the priests are much assisted by the boys whom they teach, in such offices as the bringing of water and the sweeping of the court attached to the wihara'.[1]

The teacher was also under obligation to take all possible care of his student, teaching him all that he knew and never withholding anything.[2] It is evident

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1. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 313. Enumerating the duties of the student towards his teacher, the Srī saddharmāvavāda sangrahaya, a prose work belonging to the Kandyan period, says that the student should never hesitate to do manual work for the teacher. p. 573.

2. Upadēsa nālaya, v. 76.; Srī saddharmāvavāda sangrahaya, p. 573.

that most teachers devoted a considerable amount of their time to the task of imparting the knowledge they had acquired.[1] Hardy states that the explanation of various books to their students occupied a 'considerable portion' of the time of the teachers.[2] In Kandyan times each student received personal instruction and guidance from the teacher.[3] Furthermore, the relationship between the teacher and the student was not based on any financial considerations.[4] These factors must have led to the prevalence of strong bonds of affection between the teacher and the student.

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1. Sangarāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 12.
2. R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Monachism, p. 318.
3. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 120.
4. Srī saddharmāvavāda sangrahaya, p. 573.

(e) Puberty

In the case of girls, puberty appears to have been regarded as an event which marked the commencement of a new life period,[1] and in the celebration of it, the Sinhalese were most scrupulous. The first menstrual ceremony of a Sinhalese girl was usually called Koṭahaḷu mangula.[2] Hugh Nevill holds that the 'ceremony takes its name of koṭahaḷu, from koṭa, new, in Telugu and saḷu or haḷu a cloth'.[3] However, the term koṭahaḷu in Sinhalese means 'short cloth'. It is of interest to note that a term similar to koṭahaḷu, namely, koṭṭacaḷu, occurs in the twelfth century Budumuttāva Tamil inscription.[4]

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1. In Ceylon the age of reaching puberty was about twelve for the girls. The following is a casual reference made in this connexion: 'Two were girls, the elder fourteen but as yet with no signs of puberty, which here appears quite often at 12 and even 11'. Eudelin De Jonville, Journal of a Tour in the Galle and Mature Districts in 1800, in Travels in Ceylon, ed. R. Raven-Hart, p. 81. Sinhalese girls generally married soon after puberty. Evidence to this effect is given by the Mangul kavi, the Upāsaka janālankāraya, the Vinanavastuprakaranaya and a number of folksongs. See infra, pp. 168ff.

2. See Hugh Nevill, Sinhala verse (kavi), Part I, p. 327.; koṭahaḷu dīpavanse, Or. 6611 (263), Fol. 1, v. IV; Koṭahaḷu kavi I, Or. 6615 (315), Fol. 8, v. II.

3. Hugh Nevill, Sinhala verse (kavi), Part III, p. 216.

4. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 307.

Paranavitāna takes it to be the same as the Sinhalese koṭasaḷu or koṭahaḷu meaning 'short cloth': '... according to the context, the word ought to mean some kind of service performed by the washermen. It seems to be the same as the Sinhalese koṭasaḷu or koṭahaḷu which means 'short cloth' and is applied to the cloth worn by a girl on the occasion of her attaining puberty. This cloth, as well as the ornaments worn by the girl on the day of her menstruation form the perquisites of the washerwoman for her services on the occasion, which usually consist of bathing the girl after the period of uncleanness'.[1] Pieris too, renders the term koṭahaḷu into English as 'short cloth'.[2] According to Jinānanda the cloth worn by a girl at the time of her attaining puberty was called koṭahaḷuva.[3] It may be that girls generally wore a koṭahaḷuva, 'short cloth', until they attained puberty and that usually, only the matured women wore the hēla or the long cloth. In reference to the dress generally worn by the women in Kandyan times Davy too observes: '... they leave the head uncovered, and wear a long cloth, of a single breadth,

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1. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 307.
2. Ralph Pieris, Sinhalese Social Organization, p. 175.
3. K. Jinananda. Apē sirit virit, p. 32.

called hala, wrapped round their loins, and thrown over their left shoulder'.[1] Considering the foregoing facts, we may conclude that kotahalu quite possibly may mean what it seems to mean, namely a short cloth.

When a girl came of age, she was kept apart either in the house or in a separate leafy shed, kola-naduva,[2] where she lived segregated from all but female company for fourteen days.[3] The motive for seclusion imposed on girls at their first menses was obviously a relic of the ingrained fear which the Sinhalese

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 114.

2. Kotahaluamutu I, Or. 6615 (413), Fol. 4; Kotahaluamutu II, Or. 6604 (103), Fol. 1.

3. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2; See also Kilidosaya, vv. 15-16: The Kotahalukavi II, Or. 6615 (314) mentions that princess Madevi was lodged in a separate hut when she became unclean on attaining puberty. Fol. 3, vv. III-IV.

entertained of menstrual blood,[1] for it is seen that not only after their first menses but also during subsequent menstrual periods, women were considered unclean and were under a taboo (kili) until the menstrual flow concluded and they ceremonially became clean by taking a bath: 'So long as the Women have their Infirmities or Flowers upon them, they are accounted very unclean, insomuch that the very house is polluted in that degree that none will approach near it .... But after she hath washed her Head and Body all is purified again'.[2]

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1. This fear in turn was undoubtedly connected with the fear the Sinhalese entertained of demons and spirits. For instance, Kaḷukumāra who was supposed to cause many afflictions on women, was also believed to be a demon who was particularly fond of menstrual blood. The Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, which is a collection of verses evidently composed to be recited at ceremonies performed to propitiate the demon Kaḷukumāra, illustrates this:

   koṭahaḷu gevalē niti gävasennē
   kili mala lē pili lobaya karannē
   kaḷu kumaruni topa näta vilivannē
   budda anat topa noasā innē

   O Kaḷukumāra! Are you not ashamed of yourself. You haunt every house in which there is a koṭahalu ceremony. You relish not only their unclean blood, but also their soiled clothes. (It looks as if) you would never listen even to the words of the Buddha. Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, v. 16.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

During her first menses the girl was subjected to a number of taboos. She could not cook nor even touch any cooking utensils or water vessels. She was expected to avoid eating fried foods.[1] Until the purificatory bath was taken she was not allowed to approach a place of worship. In fact, this appears to have been a taboo which women had to observe even during their subsequent menstrual periods: 'Women having their natural infirmities upon them may not, neither dare they presume to come near the Temples or houses of their Gods. Nor the men, if they come out of houses where such women are'.[2]

Since it was believed that during the period of defilement women were most susceptible to the attacks of demons and spirits,[3] the girl was always associated

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1. Kilidōsaya, v. 17; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 116.

3. Besides Kaḷukumāra whom we have already mentioned, Riri yakā also must have been considered a demon who hankered after menstrual women, for as his name itself suggests, he was the Demon of Blood. In point of fact, it was believed that he was partial to any person who suffered from a discharge of blood from his system. See Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, vv. 101-168.

with a few elderly women,[1] who took scrupulous care to keep a lamp with seven wicks always burning both day and night in the house or the hut. As iron was considered to be a safe-guard against the danger from evil influences of demons and spirits, an iron weapon was kept close to the girl, throughout the period of defilement.[2]

In the meantime, the parents of the girl consulted an astrologer who examined the girl's horoscope and ascertained whether the girl attained puberty under lucky stars or not. The girl's future lot was supposed to depend on the planetary positions at the time she came of age. Sinhalese folklore, which is an important source of information concerning the customs and ceremonies of the Sinhalese, make copious references to parents who consulted astrologers as to whether their daughter attained puberty at an auspicious hour (<u>näkata</u>): 'At

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1. <u>gennā anganan räkaval tara koṭa</u>
<u>kanyā nūlut tira äda vaṭa koṭa</u>
Women were called in to guard (the shed) and around it curtains and sanctified cords were drawn. <u>Koṭahalu dīpavanse</u>, Or. 6611 (263), Fol. 2, v. II.; Hugh Nevill uses the term 'foster mothers' to denote these women who were called in to be in company with a girl who was lodged in a separate hut on the occasion of the first menstrual period. <u>Sinhala verse (kavi)</u>, Part III, p. 281.

2. K. Jinananda, <u>Apē sirit virit</u>, p. 33.

that time the Princess arrived at maturity, Because that teacher was also the astrologer (naekatrāla), the king went near him to ask about the naekata (prognostics depending on the positions of the planets) for her arriving at maturity'.[1] 'After the child became suitable (for marriage) he went near the Lord or monk of the pansala to look at her naekata. The Gamarāla said to the monk, 'Anē! Lord, there is a female child of mine; the child became suitable (for marriage). You must look at the naekata', he said to the Lord.

Thereafter, when the monk looked at the naekata, besides that it is very good for both the parents, it was said in the naekata that the man who calls her (in marriage) on that very day is to obtain a kingdom'.[2] '.... the Gamarāla inquired regarding the naekata at his daughter's reaching marriageable age. The man replied, 'Through this little lass (paencī) seven men will die. Anē! O Gamarāhami, because of this little lass don't make this country desolate', and advised killing her'.[3]

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1. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 151.

2. Ibid, p. 280.

3. Ibid, p. 298.
   It is noteworthy that Parker had heard these tales in the Kandyan provinces.

These references show that the girls who attained puberty on the days which the prognostications of the astrologer had signified to be unlucky were considered a source of danger even to their parents and others. Evidence suggests that certain expiatory ceremonies were held in the case of girls who attained puberty on inauspicious days, to ward off dangers that would otherwise befall them.

> siv säṭa silpaye ganitavarunnē
> gennā malvara nohota balannē
> bisavaṭa malvara dōsa tibennē
> yāga kerev bisavaṭa nelesinnē
>
> Astrologers versed in the sixty four arts were summoned and inquired as to whether the queen attained puberty on an auspicious hour. (They) found that there were faults, dōsa, and performed (an expiatory ceremony called) yāgaya in the following manner.[1]

There were a number of rites both minor and important, to be performed at the time a girl was restored to purity at the end of her period of defilement. The astrologer fixed an auspicious day and hour for the ceremony of purification, and it was the washerwoman who officiated at this ceremony. In reference to this sacerdotal function of the washer caste, Hugh Nevill

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1. Koṭahaḷu upata, Or. 6615 (410), Fol. 16, v. II.

makes the following observation: - 'There is I think no doubt that the Radawā washers at this ceremony, continue to perform an ancient priestly duty, which belonged to them before their fall to their present inferior position'.[1]

At the auspicious hour, the girl was conducted to a bathing-place with her face covered,[2] and made to stand on a mat, kalālaya,[3] facing the direction pronounced by the astrologer to be lucky. It was customary to keep in the bathing-place twigs of any milk-bearing tree, preferably of the jak (Artocarpus integrifolia) tree[4] and a pot with a bunch of coconut flowers, punkalasa.[5]

Next, the washerwoman standing on a heap of paddy or unhusked rice, vīgoḍa, poured water on the

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1. Hugh Nevill, Sinhala verse (kavi), Part III, p. 278. Services of washermen were in demand on all occasions of marriage, puberty, and funeral. In view of his indispensability in many domestic ceremonies, it is hardly surprising that he was addressed as hēnamānā, uncle-washer, while his wife was called riḍināndā, aunt-washer. See H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 286.

2. Koṭahaḷukavi I, Or. 6615 (315), Fol. 9, v. I.; Koṭahaḷu dipavanse, Or. 6611 (263), Fol. 4, v. II.

3. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 32.

4. See Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

5. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 32.

girl's head from an earthen vessel, kalaya.[1] At the end of this purificatory bath, the washerwoman threw the vessel over her head into the water, or dashed it against a jak tree.

Then the girl put on a new cloth, presented by the washerwoman. The latter was entitled to the dress and ornaments worn by the girl at the time of her attaining puberty in addition to other perquisites.[2] In reference to this custom Hugh Nevill observes: 'The Koṭahaḷu ceremony is performed over maidens when they first attain puberty, ... After her purification, a clean cloth is given to her, and her own becomes the property of the celebrant'.[3]

After the ceremonial ablution the girl was taken under a milk-bearing tree, usually a jak tree, and given a sickle with which she stabbed the trunk of the tree several times, uttering the following words at the same time:

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1. Koṭahaḷu kavi I, Or. 6615 (315) says that when a certain princess became polluted on attaining puberty, she was rendered free from it by a washerwoman, who poured water on her while standing on a heap of paddy, vīgoḍa, Fol. 9, vv. I-IV. See also, K. Jinananda, Ape sirit virit, p. 32.

2. See Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, p. 26.

3. Hugh Nevill, Sinhala verse (kavi), Part I, p. 327.

piyāṭa vas näta
ammāṭa vas näta
sahōdara sahōdariyaṇṭa vas näta
gena yana sväniyāṭa vas näta
naṭa vas näta
ō siyalu vas ne kirigasaṭa pā vēvā

(If I attained puberty under an unlucky star), let the evil effects of it pass on to this milk-bearing tree. May no danger befall (my) father, mother, brothers, sisters, the man who is to marry me or me (on account of it).[1]

The girl thus rendered free from pollution was taken back home. Care was taken to avoid seeing bad omens[2] on the way. As soon as she entered the house[3] the girl went three times round a mat on which some milk-rice, kiribat, bananas, seven kinds of curries,

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1. See K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 33. It is rather difficult to render the term vas into English. Ediriweera Sarathchandra gives the following definition concerning it. 'Vas, or vas-dos, as it is sometimes referred to, is, in its most general meaning, a mysterious evil influence or evil power that affects adversely the lives of people, preventing them from being successful in their undertakings, and bringing illness and other misfortunes on them'. The Sinhalese Folk Play, p. 25.

2. See Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 103.

3. According to Koṭahaluamutu II, Or. 6604 (103), the girl, after her purificatory bath, should be conducted to her house by its northern entrance, uturudorakaḍin. Fol. 2.

hatmāḷuva, coconuts and a lamp with seven lighted wicks were placed; and as she went round the nat she pounded with a pestle some paddy which was strewn round the various articles.[1] Next, the girl made obeisance to the lamp and put out its wicks by clapping her hands.[2] After going through these formalities, the girl neatly dressed and adorned in her best was taken to the verandah of the house, where she saluted[3] the relatives and friends of the family, and received their blessing.[4] The ceremony then came to an end with a feast to the assembled guests.

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1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

2. Ibid, p. 2.

3. For the Sinhalese modes of salutation see, Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 142.

4. The Koṭahaḷukavi I, Or. 6615 (315) says that women who possess unlucky signs and bodily marks, should not come forward to bless a girl who had returned home after the ceremonial ablution.

   äs vaparäti dat bollē gānun
   vakka gasā käsi nusa äti gānun
   attul pattul loku bara gānun
   noganda kiv āvāḍumaṭa elandun

   Women who are cross-eyed, women who have protruding teeth, women who are hunch-backed and women who have large feet and hands, are not fit enough to bless such a girl. Fol. 7, v. X.

In the case of boys puberty was only an insignificant phase in the passage from boyhood to adolescence. There was an important ceremony, however, which a Sinhalese youth had to undergo before he thought of marriage. This was the ceremony of shaving of the beard, mangul rävla bāna. It is worth noting that it was the village barber,[1] ambättaya, who officiated at this ceremony instead of the washerman.[2] The astrologer was consulted as to the auspicious hour at which it should be performed. After saluting the boy's uncle and obtaining his permission, the barber performed the operation of shaving and put the shavings into a cup. The parents and other relatives of the boy then put some coins into this cup; and at the end of the ceremony these were taken by the celebrant.[3]

The ceremony of shaving of the beard in itself was neither long nor tedious. Nevertheless, the event was considered to be an occasion for rejoicing and feasting. In fact, it appears that there was an obligation imposed by custom on the youth, to give a sumptuous

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1. See Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 109.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life, p. 2.

3. Ibid, p. 2.

feast to all his relatives and neighbours, on the day he went through the ceremony of shaving of the beard. Writing in 1807 Cordiner makes the following observation: 'The Cingalese youth wear their beards for some time after they attain the age of puberty; and before they undergo the operation of shaving, they are obliged to give a sumptuous entertainment to all their relations and neighbours. When a young man is so poor that his circumstances do not enable him to comply with this custom at the usual period, he continues wearing his beard until the smiles of fortune afford him an opportunity to get rid of it in the established manner'.[1]

It is seen that amongst the Sinhalese the ceremony of shaving of the beard served as the stepping stone to the adult life; and a youth who had gone through it was considered a person fit for marriage. The following folksong, apparently composed to tease a love-lorn youth, illustrates the fact that the Sinhalese regarded the shaving of the beard as a ceremony which suggested a change in the physiological status of a person.

ahasa balannē handa taru dakinṭada
hossa levannē sāgini nasanṭada

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1. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 94; See also, James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p. 59.

rävla nadinnē näkatata kapanṭada
koi dēsen anganak nohi gēnṭada

Why do you gaze at the sky? Is it to take a glance at the moon and the stars? Why do you lick your lips? Is it to get rid of your hunger and thirst? Why do you caress your beard? Is it (to indicate that you want) to shave it on an auspicious day? (If so), from what country (village) do you intend bringing a girl here?[1]

Since sixteen was traditionally considered to be the age of maturity for boys,[2] it could be presumed that the Sinhalese youth underwent the ceremony of the shaving of the beard at about that age. Thenceforward he was regarded as an adolescent, and his parents began to make inquiries about a suitable bride for him.[3]

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1. Jana kav kalamba, v. 13.
2. See infra, p.174.
3. See infra, pp.178 ff.

Chapter IV

Marriage

(a) Marriage Age

It appears that the Sinhalese considered marriage almost obligatory for everyone, and that bachelors and old maids were practically unknown in Kandyan times.[1] Confirmed bachelors and spinsters were not regarded as full-fledged members of the society; moreover celebacy

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1. 'Old bachelors and maids are rarely to be seen amongst the Singalese; almost every man marries, and marries young'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 284. There is an interesting Sinhalese folksong which appears to have been composed to ridicule an old spinster:

   hisakē ṭika kapu kullak sēnut tavana dīga yana kālēlū
   kaṭē datut ṭika ṭika aduvā nut bāla.kalaṭa āvē nätilū
   dāyādayakut sarikaragena niti himiyek ena naga balanavalū
   harakabāna gaha kola risivānut pinciṭa bahadena aya nätilū

   Although her hair is like a winnowing-fan full of cotton, (she says that) she is still of marriageable age. A few of her teeth are missing; (but she says that) she is still too young to have all her teeth. Her dowry is ready; she too is ready to go away with a husband. (But the only hitch is that) although men like to have cattle and land, no one will want (this woman) Pinci. Jana kav kalamba, v. 16.

was regarded as a misfortune.[1]

Sinhalese social opinion was against the parents who unduly delayed their daughters' marriage for several years beyond the age of puberty; and some of the Sinhalese poems discuss the advisability of getting rid of unmarried daughters as soon as possible:

> nisi kala vayasaṭa pämununa tänadima aganan
> saraṇaka dīma yatē
> näti nam un häma vädū māniyan haṭa mut agaharu
> karanu ätē
> When girls attain the right age (for marriage) they should be given in marriage without delay. If not they will definitely disgrace even their mothers who gave birth to them.[2]

Ingrisi haṭana states that the expelling of enemies and

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1. In the circumstances, Sinhalese girls seem to have desired an early marriage. In the following folksong a spinster expresses her wish to contract a marriage without any further delay:

> ahala pahala säma anganan dīga yatē
> naraka kalaṭa mama gedarama nāki vetē
> mage minihā tava melovaṭa ävit nätē
> daru huratal maṭa nam kisidāka nätē
> All the women in the neighbourhood are getting married; but bad luck forces me to continue to grow old in the (parental) home. I wonder whether my man has not come into this world as yet. It seems as if I would never get an opportunity to fondle a baby (of my own). Sivupada māle, p. 6.

2. Upadēsa mālaya, v. 31.

the giving away of young women (yovnaganan) in marriage, are tasks which have to be performed as quickly as possible.[1]

It may be that Sinhalese parents contrived to get their daughters married early, as unmarried young girls were considered a burden to them; but evidence does not suggest the prevalence of rigid restrictions as to the age of marriage. The available material only points to the conclusion that particular care was taken to give daughters in marriage as early as possible.

Since there is a variety of opinion among the authorities, we cannot say with precision whether puberty was considered the most important factor governing the marriage of girls or not. Baldaeus says: 'Cingalezen .... marry out their daughters very early in life in their 10th or 11th year, ... it being the only way they say, of testing the chastity of their brides'.[2] It seems as if Baldaeus means to say that the Sinhalese preferred to give their daughters in marriage before they reached maturity, as it provided a safeguard against any pre-marital sexual relationship. But the accounts of Knox

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1. Ingrisi hatana, v. 73.

2. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 385.

and Davy indicate that the Sinhalese were not so much concerned about the pre-marital chastity of their wives. In the words of Knox, the Sinhalese 'did not matter or regard whether their Wives at the first Marriage be Maids or not',[1] and Davy says that the first fortnight the newly married couple 'live together is a period of trial, at the end of which the marriage is either annulled or confirmed'.[2] This evidence leads one to doubt the truth of the statement that the Sinhalese married off their daughters very early with the intention 'of testing the chastity of their brides'.

However the practice of marrying when quite young seems to be an old one, for Saddharmaratnāvaliya, a thirteenth century Sinhalese literary work, tells how some female devotees engaged in meritorious deeds so that the merits acquired would help them to contract marriages in the next life before they had passed their tender age in the parental home and had grown too old to marry, (gei indana mūkurā nogosin bālakalana saranayāna pinisa).[3] It may be that this attitude was strengthened

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.
3. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 590.

after the Kandyan provinces came under the Malabar influence, for in Malabar and in India generally, girls were often married before puberty.

The available material, however, makes it clear that the Sinhalese girls generally married after puberty. Mangul kavi, gives us a description of an ordinary Sinhalese bride. If the brides were girls who had not attained puberty, this description would not be appropriate at all, for it speaks of a nature girl whose 'breasts are full grown and beautiful' and whose 'hips are broad'.

yavvana keli lol vayase siṭinnē
pun piyayuru yuvalin bäbalennē
daru väḍumaṭa pululukula näṭennē
giya kala mulu gedarana his vannē

gē dora kaṭayutu sondaṭa dänennē
iyumaṭa pisumaṭa sondaṭa dänennē
viyumaṭa nelumaṭa sondaṭa dänennē
giya kala gama raṭa säma his vannē

She is in her youthful age, and fond of play. Her breasts are full grown and beautiful. Her broad hips long to bear children. When she goes away (with her husband after the wedding) the whole house will be empty.

She is very clever at household work, cooking and weaving, and weeding. When she goes away (with her husband after the wedding) the whole

village will be empty.[1]

These verses lead us to presume that Sinhalese girls normally married when they had reached the age of maturity.

Upāsakajanālankāraya mentions a girl who prayed that if she did not speak the truth she should not be able to find a suitable husband at the age of sixteen and should reach the age of twenty-five as a spinster.[2]

The Vinānavastuprakaraṇaya constantly refers to girls who were given away in marriage after they

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1. Mangul kavi, vv. 19-20. Authorities are agreed that the Sinhalese bride left her parental home with her husband once the wedding was concluded, usually on the morning of the second day. Knox states: 'The next day having dined he taketh his Bride, and departeth home with her, putting her before him, and he following her, with some of her Friends to Conduct her'. pp. 148, 149. Davy agrees with Knox when he says: 'The next morning the bride led by the bridegroom and accompanied by all their friends, is conducted to his father's house', p. 286. This too indicates that the Sinhalese bride was usually a nature girl, for among most people who practised child marriage the bride continued to live with her parents even after the wedding, until she attained puberty.

2. Upāsaka janālankaraya, p. 217.

attained puberty (vāḍiviya päṇiṇi kala).[1]

Sinhalese folk songs, which unquestionably throw much light on various aspects of Sinhalese life, provide information on the subject of the marriage age, too. In the following folksong a mother expresses her unhappiness at not being able to find a husband for her daughter although she had been trying to find one, 'from the day the daughter attained puberty'.

bōvala mänikage vāḍimal dōniva labana mäse
dīgayaka detī
ēnadivaṭa tava bāla kelīṭat gurudeniyen kaṭayutu
asatī
nagē ekīṭat loku unu tän siṭa nangul äsū nut
tavat nätī
kopamana mē raṭa pirimin hiṭiyat ēki ganṭa
ena kenek nätī

Bovala Mänika's elder daughter is to be given in marriage next month. In addition to that, there is a proposal from Gurudeniya regarding her younger girl too. (But I am not so fortunate) I have been making a fruitless attempt to contract a marriage for my daughter

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1. Vimānavastuprakaraṇaya, pp. 77, 110, 226. The author of Vimānavastuprakaraṇaya often uses the tern vāḍiviya päṇiṇima to denote the attainment of puberty, while some writers prefer the tern malvara venava or koṭahaḷuvenava. See Koṭahaḷu upata, Or. 6615 (415); Koṭahaḷu kavi, Or. 6615 (315).

from the day she attained puberty. There are so many men in this country, but none come forward to receive her in marriage.[1]

We quote here yet another folksong which affords further evidence on the subject of marriage age. This song expresses the yearning of a barren woman who pines for a child, and makes a stray reference to the age at which she was married.

desavan ovadan lū nav langa siṭa vāḍi vayasaṭa pänununa vigasin
saranaka dun mut daruvan näta pera pavakin hō kisi devi kōpen
bāra hāra neka paṇḍuruda pidi mut pihiṭak näta in mage karunem
daru päṭiyek naṭa labā dunōtin pudannemī ruva tani ridiyen

I lived with my mother who used to din into my ears words of advice; as soon as I reached the age of maturity I was given in marriage, but as a result of a sin I have committed in a former life or due to a divine displeasure, I have no children. I took so many vows and offered numerous sacrifices, but bad luck prevents me from having a child. If I am blessed with a child, I will gratify (the god who listened to me) with an offering of a silver image.[2]

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1. Jana kav kalamba, v. 27.

2. Ibid., v. 23.

This song not only illustrates how a sterile woman resorted to various remedies in order to become a mother, but also indicates that Sinhalese girls generally married after puberty.

Writing concerning Sinhalese marriage Heydt states: '... the parents arrange it beforehand with each other, since they can easily see where their children are inclined'.[1] This statement goes to show that although it was not considered etiquette for the young men and women to make the first move in regard to bringing about their own marriages, they were at liberty to play a significant part in the matter. This in turn shows that parents arranged marriages only when the interested parties were old enough to have opinions of their own, and that early betrothals were not the rule. Otherwise it would not have been possible for the parents to 'see where their children are inclined'.

Regarding the marriageable age of men Davy states: 'When a young man has reached the age of eighteen or twenty, he is considred marriageable'.[2] The following folksong will corroborate this statement:

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 132.

2. John Davy, An Account of The Interior of Ceylon, p. 284.

appage ambuvaṭa nāva epāvī kaḷuvara rākadi piṭakeruvai
pahudā kāḷayen lī daṇḍu genavit geyak tanannaṭa nulapiruvai
visiviya läbilat ambuvak nätikoṭa geyak kumāṭadāi naṭa hitu nai
kaḷu mānage duva gannaṭa läbunot ambuvat gedarat ekatänanai

My father's wife (step-mother) who hates me, drove me out (of my home) on a dark night. The very next day I went to the forest and fetched timber to build a house. (But later) I thought, 'why should I have a house when I don't have a wife even though I have reached the age of twenty'. If I can get Uncle Kalu's daughter (in marriage) I should be getting a wife and a house at the same time.[1]

This song indicates that twenty must have been recognised as the ideal age for the marriage of males in Kandyan times.

Literary works such as Uragajātaka kāvya and Purāṇa kōlamkavipota mention men who married at the age of sixteen.[2] However, we cannot rely on this evidence, as sixteen was only traditionally considered to be the age of maturity for boys. Rājāvaliya has it that prince

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1. Jana kav kalamba, p. 1.

2. Uragajātakā kavya, vv. 27, 28; Purāṇa kōlam kavipota, v. 369.

Parākramabāhu 'lived in obscurity until he attained the age of sixteen',[1] after which he was raised to the throne by the leading men of the country. This indicates that the prince was regarded as a minor until he was sixteen. A folksong says that 'until you reach the age of sixteen nothing but your teacher's voice will strike your ears': (solos viyaṭa lanvana tek gurunge handa nai desavana). Kavṇinikondola mentions a person who 'swam the ocean of wisdom' (nāna sayuru) until he attained the age of sixteen and acquired a 'gem-set ornament' in the form of learning.[2] Though poetically expressed, from these statements we gather that in Kandyan times a boy was expected to sit at the feet of his teacher until he was sixteen years old. This evidence in turn makes it clear that sixteen was traditionally regarded as the age of maturity for boys. However, this does not in the least mean that at sixteen a boy was considered fit for marriage. The actual age at which most Sinhalese young men married must have been definitely higher than the age of maturity. This was especially the case because the Sinhalese desired the potential bridegroom to be older than the bride to be. Describing how a father made inquiries regarding a bride

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1. Rājāvaliya (Eng. tr.) p. 68.

2. Kavṇini kondola vv. 258, 259.

for his son, Davy states: 'The father having selected a family of his own caste and rank, pays the master of it a visit..... If both parties are so far satisfied, the father of the young man makes another visit to his friend, to see the lady, and enquire respecting her qualifications, age, and disposition. He is contented if she is younger than his son, in good health, free from ulcers and corporal blemishes, possessed of a pretty good disposition, and acquainted with the ordinary duties of a housewife'.[1]

This statement not only makes it quite clear that the Sinhalese father was very keen on scrutinizing numerous details when selecting a bride for his son, but also indicates that it was preferred that the age of his potential daughter-in-law should be less than that of his son.

There may have been contrary instances of marriage in which the bride was older than the bridegroom;

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 284, 285.

but these could not have been common.[1] Sinhalese writers often treat the disparity in the age of marriage partners as something natural and proper and advise the wives to look after their husbands when they are old and feeble.[2]

Considering the foregoing facts, we may conclude

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1. Of course in the case of a polyandrous union where, even if there were seven brothers, the common wife was considered to be the wife of all of them, the younger husbands were perhaps younger than the common wife. However such a union cannot be regarded as a contrary instance of marriage in which the husband was younger than the wife; the reason being that the eldest brother alone was legally married to the common wife. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilão, p. 108.

2. In the following verse Upadēsamālaya says that it is the duty of the wife to look after her husband when he is old:

   nahaḷuvīlā dubalavīlā kesut päsilā giya namut datut väṭilā hanat akilī dās andava giya namut tanan hiniyā räkuna bāriṭa yutukanak nai koikalet eväni bāriṭa epina ätinaya nivan puraṭada yānaṭat

   Even when the husband has grown old and feeble, with his hair turned grey, teeth fallen out, skin wrinkled, and blind in both eyes, it is the duty of the wife to look after him. That merit alone would be sufficient for such a wife, even to enter the city of Nibbāna. v. 54.

that age was one of the important factors taken into account when contracting a marriage in Kandyan times.[1]

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1. However, it appears that in the case of marriages of widows and widowers age was not an important consideration: 'The Elder sorts of People usually woo and conclude their Marriages as they are in Bed together. For when they have lost their Maidenheads, they fear not much what Man comes to sleep with then, provided he be of as good quality as they, having nothing more to lose'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.

(b) The Choice of the Marriage Partner and the Rules of Endogamy

In Kandyan times, marriage was not considered to be a matter of personal choice or a mere private affair between two persons. Knox observes: '...the Parents commonly make the Match'.[1] Since the family (pavla) was the basic unit of social life, and family attachments were very strong, a person who intended matrimony had to respect the wishes of his parents and other important members of his family.[2] It was customary for the parents to insist on having their say in the selection of the

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148. See also Vinanavastuprakaranaya, p. 122.

2. Davy states: '... a family is the focus in which all the tender affections of a native are concentrated. Parents are generally treated with the greatest respect and regard; and children with extraordinary affection'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 289. See Vinanavastuprakaranaya, pp. 39, 92.

right partner for their son or the daughter.[1] This was especially so in the case of women. /The Nīti nighanḍuva in strong words states that a woman should not take any initiative in bringing about her own marriage: 'Daughters, whatever be their age, are bound to marry in accordance with the wish of their parents. They have no power to contract marriages of their own accord in disobedience to their parents' wishes.

On the death of the parents it is not considered proper for women to marry as they please alone, unless their brothers or other relations have contracted the

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1. Referring to Sinhalese marriage Heydt remarks, '..parents arrange it beforehand with each other'. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 132. Davy's comment on the same subject runs as follows: 'The preliminaries of the union are entirely settled by the parents. When a young man has reached the age of eighteen or twenty, he is considered marriageable, and it is the duty of his father to provide him with a proper wife'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 284. As to how a person should contract a marriage, Upadēsanālaya, a Sinhalese folk poem, gives this advice,

> kavā povā ätidädikala denavpiyan dennā
> dänanutukam atäralā saranagiyōtinnā
> ipida apāyē niti däḍi duk vidinḍa vennā
> denavpiyanmai sonda lesa sonda kaṭautu dannā
> If you contract a marriage against the wishes of your parents who fed you and brought you up, you will have to suffer in hell for that sin. Parents alone know what are good and what are bad (marriages). v. 36.

marriage for them; and in the absence of any relations they should consult their friends, with whose approval they should contract a marriage suitable to their caste and rank'.[1]

This parental interference must have played a significant part in limiting the choice of partners; yet the store of Sinhalese folksong furnishes many examples of love songs which go to show that the tyranny of parents and caste laws were not always able to stand in the way of lovers. As Davy states, 'almost every Sinhalese is, more or less, a poet',[2] and many a marriage proposal seems to have been made in song. This being so, in spite of the numerous rules and customs, elopements could not have been rare. In the following song a young man speaks of his love for his girl-friend and suggests that they should elope to the distant low country.

appat mahappat nangulaṭa haras vetē
rā tani pāyak tani yahanē ninda nātē
nāgē ṭikiri nā sanagana dīga yatē
kāṭat nokiyāna api yanu pahala katē

My father and uncle are against (our) marriage. At night I cannot enjoy even an hour of sound sleep on my lonely bed. (However, I know that)

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1. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. tr.) p. 20.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 239.

> Tikiri will enter into a diga marriage only with me. Without anybody's knowledge we shall go to pahala.[1]

The rest of the song contains the girl's reply,

> turulē tiyāgena rasa kiri pevvāṭa
> bālē paṭan rasa bojunut kävvāṭa
> nivan läbei nā vädu nage ammāṭa
> umbat ekka emi nokiyā ammāṭa
>
> My mother brought me up and fed me with her own milk and delicious food. I pray that she who gave me my life may be able to attain nibbāna. (Though love for my mother is great) I am ready to join you even without her permission.[2]

Love, which is universally accepted as a rich source of poetry, produced a large number of poems in Kandyan times too. Hugh Neville commenting upon a love poem, the Ādara taranga mālē (dialogue garland of love), in 1880 states: 'This is a love song, and gives the dialogue of two lovers. Their wish to be man and wife, and their mutual love from childhood upwards, are expatiated upon by them. It is written in pretty verse, and is not anywhere coarse, though their amorous confidences certainly denote a people amongst whom marriage was a matter of

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1. Sivupada mālē, p. 20.
2. Ibid, p. 22.

mutual consent alone, and are so far a little shocking'.[1]

Although it is stated here that the erotic nature of the Ādara taranga māle is surprising, the predominance of the love element is a characteristic feature of some poems of the Kandyan period.[2] Perhaps there was a considerable gap between the theoretical conception of marriage and what was found in actual practice. In spite of the social segregation of the sexes and the rigid caste laws which had been laid down with a view to controlling the choice of partners, there must have been at least a few who considered mutual attraction the most essential condition of marriage. Women had to help the men in some of the agricultural activities like transplanting and weeding, and probably these may have given them an opportunity to mix with the menfolk free from parental scrutiny.[3]

However, romantic union in Kandyan times should be considered the exception rather than the rule. Generally

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1. Sinhala verse (kavi), Part II, p. 47.

2. Anurāganālaya (the Garland of Passion), Ādarasōkanāle (the Garland of the Sorrow of Love), and Ratiratnalankāraya (the Ornament of the Gems of Passion) are a few of the love poems belonging to the Kandyan period. See C.E. Godakumbura, Sinhalese Literature, p. 255.

3. See Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 17.

a Sinhalese marriage transaction was considered to be a kind of diplomatic negotiation carried out through the elders,[1] taking into consideration the potential mate's caste, kinship connections and age.[2] Formalities leading to the final settlement of the union were not completed until the horoscopes of the bride and the bridegroom had been examined and it was ascertained that the stars were favourable to the success of the union.[3]

Of these basic considerations, caste was the most important criterion which was taken into account by the Sinhalese when contracting a marriage; this being so, it will not be possible to discuss the problem of Sinhalese marriage without examining the extent to which the caste laws regulated it.

Caste was the basis of the social order during the Kandyan period, as it had been in earlier times also. Birth determined once and for all the whole course of a

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1. See Supra pp.178ff.

2. See John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 284.

3. Knox states: 'They are likewise consulted concerning Marriages by looking upon the Man and Woman's Nativity'. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 177.

person's social activities.[1] Various endogamous caste groups had been ranked in an order of social dignity, and marriage outside these was regarded as taboo.[2] Knox says: '... they are especially careful in their Marriages, not to match with any inferior Cast, but always each within their own rank'.[3] Heydt agrees with Knox when he observes: 'They pay heed only to the family from which the bride comes, and do not seek as we do for beauty and wealth; but they are satisfied, if their children fare well according to their caste'.[4]

This rigidity of the caste laws had been the same even during the earlier periods. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, a Sinhalese work belonging to the thirteenth century,

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1. 'Among this People there are divers and sundry Casts or degrees of Quality, which is not according to their Riches or Places of Honour the King promotes them to, but according to their Descent and Blood. And whatsoever this Honour is, be it higher or lower, it remains Hereditary from Generation to Generation. They abhor to eat or drink, or intermarry with any of Inferior Quality to themselves'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105. See also, Supra, pp. 75ff.

2. 'The prohibitory decree of caste extends to the board as well as the bed, - and indeed to all forms of social intercourse'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 115.

3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105.

4. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 132.

states that parents always contrived to inquire into caste, (jāti saritänakin vicārā) before getting their children married.[1] Works of European writers, contenporary Sinhalese literature and all other available evidence point to the fact that caste customs relating to narriage continued in Kandyan times with the sane vigour.[2]

Rājāvaliya accuses the people of Kōṭṭe of contracting narriages which are contrary to the caste laws, and also of beconing Christian proselytes (aḍukula nobalā un hā hira ganuḍenu kara kulavāḍī gena unnāha).[3]

Balal katāva, a satirical poen evidently written to ridicule a person who nust have attempted to contract a narriage without paying attention to the regulations of caste, gives this advice to its readers. 'Do everything in accordance with your caste and neans. Be satisfied with whatever you get by acting in that manner. A cat will narry a cat. Will a prince narry a cat? Only a

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1. Saddharnaratnāvaliya, p. 360.

2. In fact, caste laws were so strong in Kandyan times that low castes were debarred fron entering the Order, although this was against the teachings of the Buddha. The Rājādhi Rājasinha katikāvata lays down that a person should be adnitted into the Order of nonks only after an inquiry into his caste (kula got vicarā mahana kaḷa yutu). Katikāvat sangarāva, p. 6.

3. Rājāvaliya, p. 88.

princess will suit a prince. Never was a cat married to a prince'.[1]

Nīti nighanḍuva definitely lays down that if a man enters into a matrimonial alliance with a woman of a lower caste than himself, such a marriage should be named as a marriage contrary to custom, (avacāritra saraṇaya), and that his children should be regarded as illegitimate (avajāta daruvō). Further it states that the children born of such a marriage cannot expect to inherit their father's property smoothly.[2]

Indeed, available evidence unmistakably suggests that it would have been easier to contract an inter-racial marriage in Kandyan times than an inter-caste marriage. The author of Moraṭoṭa vata, a biographical eulogy of Moraṭoṭa Dhammakkandha Thera, discusses the Brahmin origin of the Thera's family with pride.[3] Eulogizing Abayanāyaka Kuruppu Mudali, the author of Sirōpādaya too states that his patron is of Brahmin origin.[4] Above all, most of the Kandyan kings procured queens from South India. This evidence illustrates the

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1. Balal katāva, Or. 6611 (222) v. 19.
2. Nīti nighanḍuva, p. 15.
3. Moraṭoṭa vata, vv. 6-15.
4. Saparagamuvē pāraṇi liyavili, p. 210.

fact that nationalistic sentiments were not as strong as caste sentiments in Kandyan times.[1]

In spite of the rigidity of the caste laws a man of high caste was at liberty to have sexual relations with a woman belonging to a lower caste without loss of social esteem, provided that he did not contract a valid marriage with her. This practice was styled gäniyak-tiyāgannavā, keeping a woman, as opposed to saraṇa pāvāgannavā, formal marriage. The former is referred to in the following section of a divi sīṭṭuva or swearing decree,[2]

> Kaḍiganuvē naharāla kiribatkumburē padiyanvelā tiyāgena hiṭi gäni kaḷurālai kapuruhāniyi kiyana undennā maharāla venuvaṭa väḍuvāin pahukālē naharāla nähī gosin....
>
> Kaḍiganuvē Maharāla (or Maharāla of Kaḍiganuva) had been keeping a woman when he was living at Kiribatkumbura. By the time he died, the woman had given birth to two children, Kaḷuhāmy and

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1. According to Nīti nighanḍuva foreigners were considered inferior only to the Mudaliperuva of the Goigama or the highest caste in Ceylon. p. 7; Available evidence indicates that Christians were ranked equal with the highest caste. Knox says: 'The highest, are the Noblemen, called Hondrews..... All Christians either White or Black are accounted equal with the Hondrews'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 106, 107.

2. For similar swearing decrees and deeds see, Saparaganuvē pāraṇi liyavili

Kapuruhāmy, on account of Maharāla.

It is interesting to note that the children born of such a union (gāniyak-tiyāgannavā), were usually referred to as 'children born on account of me', nā venuvaṭa upan daruvō, instead of as 'my children', nagō daruvō.

Knox clearly realised the difference which existed between the formal marriage and the practice of keeping a woman. When dealing with the former he states: 'They are especially careful in their Marriages, not to match with any inferior Cast, but always each within their own rank'.[1] But in reference to the latter he writes: 'It is not accounted any shame or fault for a Man of the highest sort to lay (sic) with a Woman far inferior to himself, nay of the very lowest degree; provided he neither eats nor drinks with her, nor takes her home to his House, as a wife. But if he should, which I never knew done, he is punished by the Magistrate, either by Fine or Imprisonment, or both, and also he is utterly excluded from his Family, and accounted thenceforward of the same rank and quality, that the Woman is of, whom he hath taken'.[2]

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 105.
2. Ibid, p. 106.

This account goes to show that caste endogamy was closely connected with the taboo on eating food cooked or served by a person who ranked low in the social scale. Indeed, eating together, or exchanging food seems to have had a ceremonial significance, for the Nīti nighanḍuva in the course of describing the various rites which had to be performed at the pōruva ceremony on the wedding day says: 'Some balls of the cakes, rice, milk, etc., kept on the magul-pota, (festal-dish), are then made by some chief member of the family and handed to the bride and bridegroom, who thereupon exchange them'[1]

Davy, too, observed this; he states: 'After the repast, the bridegroom enters the house, meets the bride attended by her friends; they exchange balls made of rice and cocoa-nut milk'.[2]

This exchanging of food symbolized the fact that the bride and bridegroom belonged to the same caste and that they were free to exchange food mutually.[3]

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.) p. 18.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.

3. Writing concerning the Sinhalese, Baldaeus remarks: 'They make much of their caste like the Malabaren and will not eat or drink with one of lower caste, just as many amongst the nation do not even take their meals with their own wives'. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of Ceylon, p. 385. Here the writer may perhaps be referring to the custom of not accepting food from a low caste concubine.

Knox not only mentions this rite, but also explains the significance of it: 'Then the Bride and Bridegroom both eat together in one Dish, which is to intimate that they are both of one rank and quality'.[1]

Thus the prohibition of accepting food from a low caste person and the rules of endogamy were so intimately connected that they appear almost inseparable.

In Ceylon, unlike India, the question of pollution by touch did not often arise, and this would have considerably facilitated the practice of 'keeping a woman'. Although caste prevented men from having marital relations with women of lower castes, it left them at liberty to have sexual relations with such women provided that they did not undergo a marriage ceremony including the ritual of eating together. Knox clearly distinguishes concubinage from regular marriage. That prompted him to say: '.... in this Countrey each Man, even the greatest, hath but one Wife'.[2] By the word 'wife' Knox definitely means a woman who had gone through the regular rituals of marriage, and not a mere concubine. If he had confused concubinage with regular marriage, this comment would have been different.

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.
2. Ibid, p. 150.

(c) Kinship and Marriage

All available evidence indicates that the Sinhalese preferred to get their children married into families with which they were already related by affinity.[1] It was commonly believed that old kinship bonds would make a newly contracted marriage more stable. Writers of the Kandyan period oftern referred to this prior kinship bond as nāvāsiya.[2] Literally, it means kinship connection. To the Sinhalese, a marriage was something more than a mere union of two young persons;[3] very often it was a renewal of an existing union between two families. From a Sinhaleses' point of view, it was the kinship bond brought about by a marriage that endured, while

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1. Nīti nighanduva, p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 19.

3. At the wedding feast, it was considered not quite proper for the couple to get up from their seats as soon as they had finished eating; they were expected to stay behind to keep company with the next batch of relations who would be coming to eat; thus indicating that the marriage meant the cementing of the union not merely of the bride and bridegroom, but also of two groups of relatives. Davy too, states that at Sinhalese wedding feasts the relatives of bride and the groom 'help themselves with their hands, and eat from the common pile'. He adds 'this mode of eating, peculiar to the marriage-feast, is esteemed proof of good fellowship', John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.

conjugal love was but a passing sentiment.

Traditionally, mother-in-law (nändā) - daughter-in-law (lēli) relationship was one of conflict;[1] but if there had been a prior kinship bond between the two parties, this struggle could be avoided. This would contribute to the solidarity of the newly contracted marriage.

A young bride often had to leave the parental house on marriage;[2] and if the husband was not already related by affinity it took a longer time for her to be accepted as a new member of her husband's family. It may be due to these reasons that Sinhalese parents engaged in long term understandings with other families with which they were related by affinity, regarding the future marriage of their children.

However, there were some degrees of affinity which were prohibited. For instance a person could not marry his father's or father's brother's daughter or mother's or mother's sister's daughter. Terminologically a person's father's brother (who was called mahappā or bāppā according to whether he was older or younger than

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1. See Pannankatura, vv. 29, 31, 32.

2. This was specially so in the case of dīga marriage. A dīga wife had to live in her husband's home. See infra, pp. 208 ff.

his father) was identified with his father (appā or tāttā) and his mother's sister (who was called loku ammā or punci ammā, according to whether she was older or younger than his mother) with his mother (ammā), and their daughters were identified with his sisters, whom he called akkā or nangi according to age. Within these prohibited degrees of relationship even sexual relations without marriage[1] were considered reprehensible. A marital union between two such close relatives who are within the prohibited degrees is called 'a marriage contrary to the prevailing custom' (avacāritra saranaya), by the author of Nīti nighanḍuva.[2] Moreover he terms such a marriage 'a union which destroys kinship bonds' (ñāti bhinnaka saranaya), and goes as far as to say that the children born of such a marriage should be regarded as illegitimate (avajāta).[3]

When the joint family was the rule, the development of a sense of incest among the close relatives who lived together under one roof was natural. Hence arose the belief that marriage between two of them was

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1. The reference is to the practice of 'keeping a woman', (gāniyak tiyāgannava).

2. Nīti nighanḍuva, p. 15.

3. Ibid.

a great sin (nahā pāpaya) productive of dire calamity to the whole kin group (sapta varige händi gāvena).[1] This being so, Sinhalese society never tolerated a marriage across this barrier. This was a fixed criterion within which no compromise took place, and even the members of royal families did not dare to violate this custom. Rājāvaliya narrates how the people rose against a Kandyan king who contracted a marriage within the prohibited degree of relationship. 'After this, king Jayavīra married from the Gampola dynasty, mistaking the degree of relationship. His son, Karalliyaddē Bandāra, having taken offence thereat, repaired to Pansiya pattu of Dumbara division, gained the confidence of the chiefs of the five divisions, and expelled king Jayavīra from Kandy'.[2] This is indicative of the fact that even the kings could not violate the customs of the country.

However the institution of cross-cousin marriage was prevalent among the Sinhalese, i.e. a person could marry, and preferably should marry, his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter, who was called his nānā.

In this respect Nīti nighanduva seems to be

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1. Ñāti prabēda vistaraya, p. 7.

2. Rājāvaliya (Eng. tr.), p. 82.

very liberal, for it states that a person may even marry his paternal aunt's grand-daughter, provided of course that he is not already married to her daughter.[1]

Thus to the Sinhalese all parallel cousins were either brothers and sisters, or cross-cousins, potential life partners. Many a folksong has idealised this social institution of cross-cousin marriage. Some of them directly refer to the cross-cousin (avässa massinā)'s right to marry his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter (nänā).

> vähi diya aiti gan hō äḷa samuduraṭai
> nalpäni aiti vaṭa gunu dena bambarāṭai
> nīrā aiti kitulē kalaväddāṭai
> nänā aiti kāṭada massināṭai
>
> Rivers and streams and the seaare the owners of rain water; the humming bumble-bee who frisks about the flower is the owner of its honey; the kalaväddā who dwells in the kitul tree is the owner of its sweet toddy; but who is the owner of the nänā? No one but her own massinā.[2]

This song is quite clear in its meaning, and needs no commentary. It refers specifically to a person's right to marry his nänā (father's sister's daughter or mother's

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva, p. 22.
2. Sivupada māle, v. 26.

brother's daughter).

The fact that cross-cousin marriage was a practice followed even by royalty is illustrated in the genealogies of the Sinhalese royal families. Rājāvaliya states that king Bhuvanekabāhu had two nephews (sons of his sister), Vīdiyē Bandāra and Tammiṭa Bandāra, to the eldest of whom his daughter was given in marriage.[1]

Cross-cousin marriage was such an established practice among the Sinhalese, that they considered that a man had even a right to demand that his paternal aunt's daughter or maternal uncle's daughter be given in marriage to him. If the girl was to be given to an outsider, the person who stood in cross-cousin relationship was entitled to receive as token compensation a bulat-ata or a bundle of betel leaves from the bridegroom on the wedding day; with the acceptance of this present he voluntarily relinquished all his claims to the girl, thereby

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1. Rājāvaliya, pp. 84, 85.

indicating his consent to the marriage.[1]

It was the bride's maternal uncle (avässa nānā) who usually led her to the marriage booth (nagul pōruva) and tied together the fingers of the bride and groom,[2] which further indicated that he and his son had no objection to the girl being given away to an outsider.[3]

Sinhalese customs and traditions precisely define what behaviour should be shown towards each type of relative, or kin group (nädä sanhatiya). Towards some, one had to be respectful and restrained; while with

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1. See infra, p.220 ; There is a collection of verses styled nangul kavi (wedding songs). One of these verses tells us what the bride might be expected to do when about to leave her native village with her husband.

   denavpiyan vända sanāva gannē
   nädäingen sanāva gannē
   asalväsingen sanāva gannē
   massina ennē sanāva gannē
   Salute the parents and beg them to pardon you, (salute) the relations and beg them to pardon you, (salute) the neighbours and beg them to pardon you. Here comes massinā, (salute him and) beg him to pardon you.

   Massinā referred to in the last line, is the cross-cousin. Here the bride has been asked to salute him; the reason may be that she has been married to an outsider.

2. Nīti nighanduva, p. 20.

3. See Infra, p.225.

others one could always be free and easy. Cross-cousins fall within the second group. As cross-cousin marriage was socially approved, a person was at liberty to joke and jest, and to use forms of speech suggestive of conjugal familiarity, with his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter (nänä).

One cannot expect to find a complete account of such a delicate subject as the behaviour pattern of cross-cousins in the classical literature of the Kandyan period. In this respect the folk songs of the day, which were much nearer life than were the classical literary works, appear to be more useful. They cannot be treated as complete evidence; nevertheless they furnish the missing links and fill out the picture. The following are two such songs which portray the intimate and tender relationship which existed between cross-cousins.

nassinä: mahaväli gangē diya udahaṭa galādō
anāvakaṭa handa pāyā tibēdō
lēnage väiri maha vässaṭa näkēdō
nänō umbava naṭa atvī noyādō

Will the water of river Mahaväli flow upwards?
Will the moon appear on the anāvaka day?
Will the stripes of the squirrel get washed off when it rains? Dear nänä, will you remain ever mine?[1]

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1. Sivupada mäle, v. 29.

nānā: nāväli gangē diya uḍahaṭa noyannē
anāvakaṭa handa pāyā noennē
lēnage väiri uge piṭa uḍa tiyennē
umbaṭana tamā nā langadina lübennē

The water of river Mahaväli will never flow upwards. The moon will never appear on the anāvaka day. The squirrel's stripes will remain on its back forever. And I will be yours before long.[1]

These love songs are supposed to have been sung by two lovers who were cross-cousins, on opposite banks of river Mahaväli. Although the translation given above lacks the delicate artistry of the originals, it will serve to illustrate the fact that cross-cousins enjoyed a socially approved freedom to indulge in jest and banter and to use familiar modes of speech. Neither the classical literature, nor the folk-songs indicate the prevalence of such a relationship between parallel cousins, who were prohibited from exercising the same liberty as cross-cousins exercised, the reason being that the parallel cousins were not regarded as potential mates.

The relationship which prevailed between a person and his cross-cousin's father or mother could also be termed a joking relationship. In other words a person was at liberty to jest and joke with his father's

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1. Sivupada nāle, v. 30.

sister and her husband or mother's brother and his wife in the same way as he did with their daughters; the reason was that they were not identified with his father or mother, unlike the parents of his parallel cousins, who were identified with his own parents and towards whom he had to be respectful. It appears that the deep sense of familiarity and understanding which was prevalent between cross-cousins was extended to their parents. There are folk songs which specifically reveal this relationship. From these songs, which are generally light hearted and humorous, one can get a glimpse into the strong bond of affection which existed between a paternal aunt and her brother's children or a maternal uncle and his sister's children.

The following is an interesting conversation between a nephew and his paternal aunt recorded in song.[1] The newphew indicates in an indirect way his wish to narry his aunt's daughter (obviously knowing that she had no daughters).

nephew: gindē sandun pinidiya gini siḷu vilasa
sandē kovul savanaṭa raku handase visa
bändē na nana nada yudayaṭa häna davasa
nändē itin kohomada naṭa kaladavasa

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1. These two songs and numerous other similar songs belonging to the Kandyan period appear in Kav Sangarāva, an anthology of folk songs. See vv. 514-594.

Sandal-wood paste and sweet-scented water produce heat like a flame. The sound of the cuckoo strikes my ears like the cry of a demon. I am engaged in a battle with Cupid.[1] Dear nändē, (please tell me) what will be my future.

aunt: anayut rasa vadana dī simba simba nūna
rana put yuda dinati visi siyo saha yāna
nana lat duvek näta dennaṭa esanāna
nana vat emi indin duka nätuvana bāna

Amorous men who live with their loved ones exchanging nectarous sweet words and kisses, win their battle (against Cupid) with ease. But I have no daughter to be given to you in marriage; (if the urgency is so great, and if there is no other alternative) at least I would come (to free you from torments of Cupid). Therefore refrain from worrying.

Although the nephew's question is rather sarcastic and the aunt's reply is somewhat cynical, this conversation illustrates the amount of freedom a nephew and his paternal aunt exercised to tease one another and play pranks mutually. There is a large number of such folk songs which provide significant material regarding the behaviour pattern of paternal aunt and nephew,[2] but they provide no clue to indicate that a relationship

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1. I.e. love-lorn.

2. See Kav Sangarāva, vv. 514-517, 593, 594.

of such a kind existed between a nephew and his maternal aunt. It is then clear that the behaviour pattern of these kinsfolk had a connection with the institution of cross-cousin marriage.

Cross-cousin marriage between the offspring of a brother and a sister is practised in many Hindu castes and tribes of south India, especially in Malabar and Cochin.[1] But it is not possible to say with precision that the institution of cross-cousin marriage is altogether a foreign practice which crept into Ceylon during the Malabar (Nayakkār) period of Ceylon history (1739-1815), for there is evidence that cross-cousin marriage was favoured in Ceylon even during the earlier periods.[2]

While there was a strong bond of affection between cross-cousins, evidence suggests that the relationship of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law was

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1. See E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes of South India, vol. I-VII.

2. Some references in Saddharmaratnāvaliya and other literary works of the thirteenth century prove the existence of cross-cousin marriage during the earlier periods. For instance the following reference in the Saddharmaratnāvaliya points to this:

   nagē malun heyin topagē mayilōya. ungē dū ätnam topaṭa bisōkaravayi
   They are my brothers and your uncles, if they have any daughters make them your queens. p. 304.

often one of conflict.[1] Some Sinhalese poems single out the nändā (mother-in-law) and the lēli (daughter-in-law) as a pair of relations who hate each other as natural enemies (jamma vairakkārayo). Pannankatura, a poem belonging to the Kandyan period, records an interesting conversation between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. This appears to have taken place almost immediately after the latter's wedding.

lēli (daughter-in-law): dänagat dā paṭan mav langa säpa vindē
ehemat säpa läbeda mē dīgen nändē?
From my childhood I have lived
with my mother amid comforts;
dear nändā, will my marriage
turn out to be a happy one?

nända (mother-in-law): nändā lēli kotanat pävatunē näti
... uragun samaga mädiō pem kela yadda
A mother-in-law and a daughter-
in-law can never get on peacefully
... Can serpents and frogs live
in amity?[2]

From the nändā's reply it can be gathered that she is

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1. Hence the Sinhalese saying, nändā lēli ekapārē yannē nätī, 'mother-in-law and daughter-in-law will not go along the same path together'.

2. Pannankatura, vv. 29, 31, 32.

reluctant to guarantee a happy future to her lēli.

There are many other Sinhalese poems dealing with the mother-in-law -- daughter-in-law conflict. Daru nuguṇa kavi, a poem by Tämbilipola kivindu, gives a code of conduct for the daughter-in-law. In the words of Hugh Neville this poem discusses 'the want of obedience shown by young wives to their mothers-in-law'.[1] As it was the bond of blood relationship (lē näkaṇa) which a Sinhalese had chiefly in mind, the son was not expected to intervene even if he found his mother ill-treating his wife. Such interference was usually regarded as immoral and unmannerly; and the author of Daru nuguṇa kavi too, wants the son to take sides with his mother rather than with his wife in case of a conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

In spite of these minor conflicts, strong bonds of affection between the various relatives seem generally to have prevailed in Kandyan times. This must have prompted Davy to say: 'Amongst few people, I believe, are family attachments more strong and sincere: there is little to divert or weaken them; and they are strengthened equally by their mode of life and their religion'.[2]

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1. Sinhala verse (kavi), part I, p. 95.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 289.

(d) Binna and Dīga

The Sinhalese recognized two basic types of marriage, binna and dīga, which were matrilocal and patrilocal respectively.[1] When a marriage was contracted under the binna system the husband had to live in the parental household of his wife. In reference to the binna form of marriage Nīti nighanḍuva states: 'A Bini marriage is one in which the husband contracts to go and live in the wife's house or in any family residence of hers'.[2]

Within such a family the function of leadership fell on the woman; and the man in all circumstances had to obey her.[3] In addition to this the binna husband

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva states: '... paternal and maternal right of inheritance arise from marriage', and that 'Matrimony is of two kinds; Bini and Diga'. (Eng. tr.) p. 17.

2. Ibid, p. 17.

3. We may note an interesting verse which refers to a domineering binna wife,

   appage perättē bäruvā nisāvaṭa
   binna nangulakaṭa bahadī menāhaṭa
   appā lesaṭa uni anbuvat edā hiṭa
   upan raṭaṭa yānata dän hitai maṭa

   If not for my father's compulsion, I would not have entered this binna marriage. From that day onwards (my) wife has been behaving as if she was my father. I long to go (back) to the country (village) in which I was born. Sivupada māle, p. 8.

had the economic obligation of maintaining not only his wife, but also the whole household, which might sometimes contain fairly a large number of his wife's relations including her old father and mother and unmarried sisters, living in an extended family. As such, the binna husband's task became exceedingly difficult.[1] Moreover he lived in constant fear of being sent away by his wife. Under binna marriage divorce was simple and easy; and very often it was the wife who assumed the initiative in bringing about a divorce.[2] If she desired to get rid of her husband she merely placed his personal belongings such as his betel bag (bulat nadissale) and areca cutter (girē) on the door-step, thus indicating to her husband that she wanted him no more. Many Sinhalese folksongs bear witness to the agony of binna husbands who had to toil unceasingly to please their ever displeased wives.

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1. Hence the Sinhalese saying binnakārayā eka bat patata hat davasak kamburanava, for the sake of one plate of rice the binna husband has to toil for seven long days.

2. Referring to Sinhalese marriage Knox states: '... their marriages are but of little force or validity. For if they disagree and mislike one the other; they part without disgrace. Yet it stands firmer for the Man than for the Woman'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.

gedara inṭa bä anbugē karaccalē
veläṭa yanṭa bä . känahil karaccalē
pälaṭa yanṭa bä val-ali karaccalē
yanavä inṭa kurunägal nisansalē

I cannot remain at home because my wife is ready to find fault with me at the slightest gesture. If I retire to the paddy fields there are the jackals to disturb me. Going to the hut (in the chena land) means getting nearer to the wild elephants. I must go (back) to Kurunägala and live in peace.[1]

This verse is supposed to have been recited by an unfortunate binna husband whose wife was a woman renowned for her sharp tongue.

There is another folksong styled a rabanpadē, which appears to have been originally composed to ridicule a binna husband who was dismissed by his wife.

Takka tarikiṭa binna don don
palē yaṭa häraniṭiya don don
bolē kō tala atta don don
nalē diya huḷu atta don don[2]

It is impossible to give a literal translation of this verse. The Sinhalese folk poets often used conventional refrains when their imagination failed. Here too, the words don don have no connection with the main theme

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1. Sivupada mäle, p. 19.

2. Jana kav kalamba, p. 11.

of the verse. However it mentions the three important things a binna husband was expected to keep in his possession throughout his stay in his wife's house, a walking stick (häramitiya), a talipot umbrella (tala atta), and a chulu torch (hulu atta). The woman might decide to send away the binna husband at a time when he is in poor health, in which case the walking stick would prove to be useful. The talipot umbrella would provide him shelter if asked to quit on a rainy day. The torch was to be used if the dismissal was received at night.[1] This song, though devoid of any literary value, shows how unstable a binna marriage was.

In the dīga marriage, which was patrilocal, the wife went to live with the husband. For a marriage to be called a dīga marriage, it was not necessary that the husband should take his wife to his parental home, for, according to Nīti nighanḍuva: 'The conducting of

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1. This saying is still current among the Sinhalese - especially among the Kandyans. D'Oyly too heard it and writes thus: 'The proverb is, that the Beena husband should take care to have constantly ready at the door of his wife's room, a walking-stick, a talipot, and a torch, that he may be prepared at any hour of the day or night and whatever may be the state of the weather or of his own health, to quit the house on being ordered'. John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom, p. 129. See also, Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 334.

the wife to, and the living in the husband's house or in any family residence of his - or, if he does not own a house and lands, the taking her as his wife and the conducting her away from her family to a place of lodging - constitute a Dīga marriage'.[1]

The traditional Sinhalese social pattern demanded

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva, (Eng. tr.) p. 17.

that a dīga wife should treat her husband as master,[1]

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1. Dānamutu nālaya, or. 6611 (236) gives this advice to dīga wives,

dīgaya āvit pirimin haṭa urana epā
egei tibena deya vaṭapiṭa denṭa epā
vēgaya velā tana himi haṭa bānun epā
dīgaya āri kanavāndun venṭa epā

When you have entered a dīga marriage, do not annoy your husband; never give any of the things that are in your (husband's) house to others. Even though you may loose your temper, do not scold your husband; and also do not pave the way to end your dīga marriage and thereby become a divorcee. Fol. 5.

Nikini katāva, or. 6611 (237) too gives a similar advice to a dīga wife.

vēga velā himiyan veta nobalanna
bōga ketē vāṭa käpuvā vilasinna

Never show an angry face to your husband; (if you do so), that would be like destroying the fence which protects a paddy field. Fol. 8.

The author of Upadēsamālaya wants the dīga wife to be obedient to her husband, and also advises her to take her meals only after feeding him,

dīga giyōtin anganak hiniyaṭa pāvatinnō
himi kā biv pasuvaṭa tananut sappāyanvennē

If a woman enters a dīga marriage, she should be obedient to her husband; she should eat only after the husband has eaten. p. 16.

Knox too, referring to Sinhalese wives, states: '... it is their duty to wait and serve their Husbands while they eat, and when they have done, then to take and eat that which they have left upon their Trenchers'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 140. Undoubtedly Knox is speaking of the dīga wives here.

but marriage itself did not thereby become more stable.

It is noteworthy that the law of inheritance made a distinction between binna and dīga marriage. A binna wife inherited an equal share of the parental estate with her brothers. Nīti nighanḍuva lays down that: 'If a father dies, leaving a son, and a Bini married daughter, both the children will inherit equal portions of their father's lands; and therefore, on the death of the father, the Bini married daughter may obtain a division of the lands, and receive her share; and even though she has not so separated and received her share of land, and though after the death of her father she leaves her father's premises and goes and lives elsewhere with her husband, and though her brother continues in possession of all the lands, cultivating them and performing the services due for them, and is in possession of them; if the sister who is living apart, now and then takes a part of the produce of the lands, in order to shew her right of inheritance, not only will her right of inheritance hold good, but if she has had a son born to her at her father's house during her Bini marriage, her portion of the paternal lands, will, on her death, devolve on her son'.[1]

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.) p. 61.

But a dīga wife lost her right of inheritance altogether. Nīti nighanḍuva in plain words describes where a dīga wife stood in regard to her right of inheritance thus: 'If the father dies, leaving a son and a Dīga married daughter, or several Dīga married daughters, the son will inherit all the landed property'.[1]

The only concession granted to a daughter who contracted a dīga marriage was the following: 'If a daughter, who has been divorced from her Dīga marriage, or who has been left destitute on her husband's death, returns to her father's premises, she should receive maintenance from her brother, who succeeded to the lands, or from his children. She is entitled to maintenance, but to no portion of the lands'.[2]

But if the brother arranges a binna marriage for his divorced or widowed sister and requests her to live in the parental house, she will, 'by reason of such Binna marriage .... inherit a share in the paternal lands.'[3] However if the sister contracted this binna marriage without the approval of the brother, she would

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.), p. 64
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid,

not acquire the right to a claim in the parental lands.[1]

It may be due to these peculiar laws of inheritance which prevailed in Kandyan times, that the dīga wife was constantly advised by the writers of the day to be careful in dealing with husband ,[2] for if she was divorced[3] and compelled to return to the parental home, she had to be at the mercy of her brothers, as she had no right to claim a portion in the parental lands. A dīga wife lost most of her rights in her parental home, as she was supposed to acquire rights of membership in another family after marriage.[4] However to compensate for the loss she thus incurred, it was customary to provide her with a dowry. Both the works of European writers

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1. Nīti nighanduva, p. 65

2. See supra, p.210

3. The popular notion is that dīga marriages were more stable than binna marriages, but there are some Sinhalese sayings which suggest the instability of dīga marriages too.

   nupurudu dīgayaṭa vaḍā purudu kanavänduma yehekilu
   A single life is preferable to an unhappy dīga marriage.

   arinṭa inna dīgo sevanällat ädalu
   Even the shadow of the dīga wife to be divorced is crooked. Atīta vākya dīpaniya, pp. 41, 42.

4. See infra, p.215.

and Sinhalese poems contain statements which establish the existence of a dowry system in Kandyan times. It is noted by Knox that Sinhalese did 'give according to their Ability a Portion of Cattle, Slaves and Money with their Daughters'.[1] Heydt states: '... the wife takes with her the dowry perhaps a few head of cattle, some money, clothes, and now and then, if she is of higher rank, some slaves'.[2] Nikinikatāva tells how a dowry was given when a girl entered a dīga marriage and when she was about to leave her native village with her husband:

> duvaṭa kiyana avavāda hitē äta
> eviṭa bāradī duva bānā haṭa
> ohuṭa niyama dāvādda bedādena
> ganaṭa giyai hiniyā kändā gena
>
> The daughter kept in her mind all the advice given. Thereafter she was given over to the nephew together with the dowry which they had promised. Finally the husband left for his village with her.[3]

It is noteworthy that the question of dowry did not arise in the case of a girl who contracted a binna marriage, because she continued to live in her parental home even after marriage, and also because according to

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.
2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.
3. Nikini katāva, or. 6611 (237), Fol. 10.

the law of inheritance prevalent at the time, a binna wife inherited an equal share of the parental estate with her brothers.[1]

A girl who contracts a dīga marriage was expected to take permanent residence at her conjugal home, returning to the parental home only for her confinements. However in practice she visited her parents on numerous other occasions.[2]

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1. See Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.) p. 61.

2. Upadēsa nālaya states that it is not quite proper for a daughter given in dīga marriage to visit the parental home too often,

> navdena veta ena pätiyā lesaṭa gedara pättē
> niti yānaṭa nositiya yutu dīga bāri sattē
> dīga giyot läbu hiniyā langa indīna yuttē
> nē upades ṭika läbuvot nangula tibei sattē
> The dīga wife should not think of visiting the (parental) home too frequently as a calf which often runs to its mother.
> Once you have contracted a dīga marriage you should live with the husband you have got. If you listen to this advice (your) wedlock will last long. p. 22.

(e) The Marriage Ceremonies

There appears to have been some variation in the observation of customs connected with marriage rites and ceremonies among people of different parts of Ceylon. Some authorities hold that although the people of rank followed the traditional formalities in detail, the people of the lower ranks never considered the performance of the extensive and elaborate marriage ceremonies indispensable.[1]

However, since in Kandyan times the people who ranked high in the social scale constituted the bulk of the population,[2] it may be presumed that most of the Sinhalese regarded the ritual of marriage as one of their principal social ceremonies.

The Sinhalese have been rightly described as a 'ceremonious people'.[3] Indeed, the commencement of each successive stage in the life of a typical Sinhalese was marked by a series of ceremonies,[4] and the marriage

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.

2. 'The highest, are their Noblemen, called Hondrews .... The greatest part of the Inhabitants of the Land are of the degree of Hondrews'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 106, 107.

3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 284.

4. Ibid, p. 288.

ceremony was considered to be the most important of them all. Queyroz seems to have clearly realised this, for he somewhat sardonically remarks: 'The most important thing in the mind of these heathen is marriage, because among them it is the greatest felicity in this world'.[1]

It may therefore, be conjectured that even the common people who could not afford to celebrate a wedding on a grand scale performed at least the essential part of the marriage ceremony in order to make the marriage legally binding.[2] In fact, it was this ceremony which

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1. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 87.

2. Though a poor man's marriage ceremony was never a costly one, he seems to have displayed a keen concern in the celebration of his wedding at least with the minimal formalities. It was customary for the bridegroom to bring with him the bride's wedding clothes, the significance of which was that a man was under obligation to provide clothes for his wife. A statement of Knox shows that even extreme poverty had not induced the Sinhalese to dispense with this custom: '... the Man carrieth or sends to the Woman her Wedding Cloths; which is a Cloth containing six or seven yards in length, and a Linnen Wast-coat wrought with Blew and Red. If the Man be so poor that he cannot buy a Cloth, it is the Custom to borrow one'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148. Thus we see how much importance was attached to marriage customs even by the poor.

distinguished regular marriage from concubinage.[1]

It is somewhat difficult for us to fix the exact details of the ritual conducted in Sinhalese marriage ceremonies because they varied considerably according to the rank of the parties concerned[2] and the district in which they lived. The following is an attempt to enumerate the marriage ceremonies observed by the people of rank who lived in districts contiguous to Kandy.

As has already been shown it was the parents who usually took the initiative in regard to the selection of the right partner for their son or the daughter, taking into consideration the potential mate's caste,[3] kinship connections,[4] age[5] and other factors. After all these considerations had been looked into, an astrologer was

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1. 'To prove a regular marriage will be to make it appear that the usual ceremonies were observed'. Sawers in Hayley's A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, Appendix I, p. 34.

2. According to Forbes there were some marriage ceremonies which the low castes were not allowed to perform. See Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 332.

3. See Supra, pp. 183 ff.

4. See Supra, pp. 191 ff

5. See Supra, pp. 164 ff.

consulted to ascertain whether the respective horoscopes of the couple agreed, 'it being essential to the union that the two agree'.[1] In the event of an agreement between the horoscopes the astrologer fixed the auspicious day and hour (näkata) for the final ceremony.

The wedding was celebrated in the bride's house, in front of which a shed (naduva) was usually put up.[2] On the day chosen for the celebration of the marriage, the bridegroom set out from his house, taking with him the bride's wedding cloth[3] and accompanied by his relatives, his friends, his washerman and four men 'bearing a large pingo laden not only with all sorts

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286. Davy does not state whether it was customary for a relative of the bridegroom to go to the house of the bride to get the horoscope or whether an intermediary was sent for it. The Nīti nighanduva states that a relative of the bridegroom went with a pingo to the bride's house and obtained her horoscope. (Eng. tr.) p. 17. Forbes makes the following observation in this connection: 'The intended bridegroom.... repairs to the house of his mistress, accompanied by a few of his relations, and taking his horoscope with him. He solicits and receives her horoscope from her friends, and both are then placed in the hands of an astrologer, who decides whether the presiding planets at their respective births admit of their union'. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, pp. 327, 328.

2. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 90.

3. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. tr.), p. 18.

of provisions, but likewise with a piece of white cloth, and with jewels and ornaments, varying in number and richness according to the means of the individual'.[1]

When the bridegroom's party arrived at the vicinity of the bride's house they were sometimes met by the cross-cousin (avässa-massinā) of the bride who demanded a bundle of betel leaves from the bridegroom.[2] As has already been shown[3] the cross-cousin marriage was such a deep rooted institution in Kandyan times that it was considered that a person had even a right to demand that his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter be given in marriage to him. In the event of the girl being given away in marriage to an outsider, her cross-cousin was offered a bundle of betel leaves as token compensation. Thereafter, the cross-cousin permitted the bridegroom's procession to

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.; This pingo of provisions was called tada kada, and was regarded as a contribution towards the expenses of the wedding feast. In this connection Knox states that the bridegroom took with him 'Provisions and Sweet-meats..... according to his Ability, towards the Charges of the Wedding'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.

2. This bundle of betel leaves was styled kadulu bulat (literally, gate betel) the reason being that it was offered before an entrance into the bride's house was effected.

3. See supra, pp. 198 ff.

proceed. However, before it moved further, a messenger was sent to the bride's house with a bundle of betel leaves, each leaf signifying one person in the party which accompanied the bridegroom, so 'that the relations of the bride may know how many guests they have to entertain'.[1]

When the bridegroom's party had reached the premises, the bride's relations came out to meet the guests, taking two trays of betel leaves (bulat heppu) with them, one for the men, the other for the women. The guests were then presented with betel leaves and conducted to the house, the bride's relatives preceding.[2]

As the bridegroom entered the house a brother of the bride washed his feet,[3] whereupon the former presented the latter with a ring. It was usually dropped

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 329.

2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 329. Niti nighanduva does not speak of the custom of taking two trays of betel leaves by the bride's relatives, when they came out to meet the bridegroom's party. However, it states: 'When close to the bride's house some of her relations, coming out to meet the party, conduct it with due respect to the house'. (Eng. tr.) pp. 17, 18.

3. Sometimes this was done by a servant of the family. See Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 329.

into a vessel of water.[1] The bridegroom next dropped a few coins (pāvaḍa kāsi) upon the white cloth (pāvaḍa) spread on the ground for his party to walk on, as payment for the washerman, who unfolded it. The guests were then seated by the host, taking into account their respective rank,[2] and treated to betel.

Next followed the feast, which was really the evening meal. Davy describes a wedding feast in Kandyan times thus: 'In the middle of the nandoo, which is covered with mats, the men of both parties seat themselves round a large pile of rice, placed on fresh plantain leaves, and garnished with curries of different kinds; the ladies do the same, collected within the house. Both parties help themselves with their hands, and eat from the common pile'.[3]

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 329

2. Ibid, p. 329. Some Sinhalese castes had sub-divisions; and even the govi people who constituted the highest caste were themselves subdivided into different ranks. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. tr.), p. 6. But since the dividing lines between some of these ranks were faint, attendance at weddings could not have been strictly confined to people of the same rank. However, certain formalities had to be observed when arranging seats for a group of guests who did not belong to the same rank. If not, there was a likelihood of some of the dissatisfied guests abruptly leaving the assembly.

3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.

After the meal, preparations were made for the principal marriage ceremony. This was held on the following morning inside the house and not in the open shed. A plank covered with a white cloth was placed in a conspicuous part of the house. On it some rice was heaped; and around this were placed a few betel leaves and two or three coconuts. On the heap of rice some coins were strewed, gold silver or copper, depending on the circumstances of the family.[1] The plank when thus prepared was called nangul pōruva.

While some were making these preparations, most of the assembled guests, who were served with betel leaves and arecanuts from time to time, spent the rest of the night in merry songs and in various indoor games such as nerenci keliya, olinda keliya and panca keliya.[2] It was also customary at weddings for the assembly to divide itself into two parties and to sing riddle songs (tēravili kavi) against one another competitively. Sometimes the guests were required to solve a puzzle called the nangul parakkuva, ' the delay of the wedding

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 330.

2. For discussions on these three games see, H. Parker, Ancient Ceylon, pp. 577, 587 and 609 respectively.

feast'.[1] Those who preferred simpler amusements spent the night 'in telling stories and in conversation'.[2] These entertainments lasted till day-break, bringing the two sets of relatives together and enhancing the fun of the occasion.

Next day, at the auspicious moment (nākata) the bride and bridegroom stepped on to the decorated plank (nangul pōruva) and stood side by side and close together, facing the direction pronounced by the astrologer to be lucky. The bridegroom then presented the bride with the white cloth (hēlaya) which he had brought with him. This ceremony, which signified a man's obligation to provide clothes for his wife, was called andinḍa dīma. Some authorities hold that it was customary for the bridegroom to present the bride with jewellery as well: 'The mother then proceeds to strip her daughter gradually of all her trinkets and ornamental parts of her rainent; to supply the place of these, the bridegroom brings forward his presents'.[3]

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1. Writing on nangul parakkuva, Parker says that it was a puzzle which was sometimes 'brought out at marriage festivals, the guests being required to solve it before partaking of the feast'. H. Parker, Ancient Ceylon, p. 624.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.

3. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 330. According to Davy the bridegroom presented the bride with a 'piece of white cloth and with the jewels and ornaments'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.

However, Knox mentions only the wedding clothes with which the bridegroom had to present the bride.[1]

A maternal uncle or some other close relative of the bride then tied together the fingers of the right hands of the bride and bridegroom.[2]

Next came the ceremony of eating together. Knox, in referring to this ceremony, also explains the significance it had in Kandyan times: 'Then the Bride and Bridegroom both eat together in one Dish, which is to intimate that they are both of one rank and quality'.[3] Nīti nighanḍuva also refers to this ceremony, but with a difference. According to that work, the bride and bridegroom did not eat out of the same plate, but exchanged food mutually when it was handed to them by a close relative.[4]

Davy mentions that the bridal pair exchanged

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.

2. According to Queyroz the tying together of the fingers of the bride and bridegroom was done by 'the nearest kinswoman of the man'. He further states that it was customary to pour 'over the two bound fingers some water out of a pitcher'. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, pp. 90, 91. In reference to this ceremony Knox states '...sometimes they tye their Thumbs together'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.

3. Ibid, p. 148.

4. Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.), p. 18.

food; but does not specifically state whether it was handed to them by a third party.[1]

The exchanging of food was followed by the ceremony of dropping betel leaves on the plank. The bridegroom gave a bundle of betel leaves to the bride, and the latter dropped it at her feet. Likewise six more bundles of betel leaves passed from the bridegroom to the bride, and were dropped on the plank on which the betrothed couple stood. At the end of the ceremony these betel leaves became the perquisite of the bride's washerman.[2]

Finally, the father of the bride poured some water over the clasped right hands of the bridal pair, symbolizing the giving away of the daughter to the bridegroom. It was also customary for the father of the bride to advise his daughter as to how she should

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 285.

2. In addition to these, the coins strewed on the plank as well as the cloth with which it was covered became the perquisite of the bride's washerman. See Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 331.

get on with her husband in her wedded life.[1]

The marriage thus solemnised, the wedded couple were brought down from the plank. The bridegroom then presented the bride's mother with a white cloth (kirikaḍa hēlaya), a lime-box (killōṭe) and a areca cutter (girē), and after a feast the bride and the bridegroom saluted every one of the guests and relatives. In fact the bride had to salute not only the guests and relations, but also her uninvited neighbours.[2] Towards the evening, the bridegroom took leave of the bride's people and returned home in procession with his bride.[3]

However, even at this stage the marriage ceremony was not considered to be completely over, and according to Forbes, until 'the third, and sometimes the seventh day, the married couple, and especially the bride, cannot lay aside their bridal raiment; these clothes they must

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1. In Kāvyasēkaraya a father advises his newly wedded daughter on the duties of an ideal wife. vv. 220-232. According to Queyroz the parents of the one or the other instructed them 'in grave and modest words on the great obligation imposed by matrimony on married persons and the quality and state of married happiness along with other things suitable to their life or state'. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 91.

2. See Supra, p.197.

3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.

have about them, awake or asleep'.[1]

The other authorities do not say whether the couple were required to be in their wedding clothes for several days. The available material however suggest that they had to undergo yet another ceremony at the bridegroom's house. This was the ceremony of pouring water on the heads of the married couple (isadiya väkkirīma). Knox has made the following observation in this connection: 'Some few days after, her Friends usually come to see her bringing a present of Provision with them. And sometimes they use this Ceremony, the Man is to stand with one end of the Woman's Cloth about his Loins, and she with the other, and then they pour water on both their Heads, wetting all their Bodies: which being done, they are firmly Married to live together, so long as they can agree'.[2]

Nīti nighanduva has it that this ceremony of pouring water on the heads of the married couple was performed on the seventh day after the principal marriage ceremony, by a maternal aunt and uncle of the bride.[3] However, according to Davy, the pair stood on a plank

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 331.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.
3. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. tr.), p. 18.

of jack-wood, and the husband poured water on his wife's head.[1]

A few days after this, the bride's parents, or some other close relations of hers, paid one more formal visit, which closed the marriage rites.[2]

Thus we see that the marriage ceremony in Kandyan times was a long and tedious one, in spite of the fact that the contract of marriage was never considered to be an indissoluble bond. But one cannot say that all these ceremonies were always performed in the minutest detail even amongst the higher classes.[3] It was customary to omit any ceremony that did not appear to be appropriate. For instance, it was sometimes preferred to omit the ritual of binding the fingers of the bride and bridegroom,[4] which was symbolic of an indissoluble union, for the Sinhalese in Kandyan times were a people who made 'little ado in their divorces'.[5] However there may have been some who performed almost all the above-mentioned ceremonies without comprehending the full significance of them.

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.
2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 332.
3. Ibid.
4. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 148.
5. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.

(f) Polyandry

Records of European writers and Sinhalese literary works afford us sufficient information regarding the system of polyandry which prevailed during the Kandyan period. Referring to this practice Baldaeus observes: 'They make light of incest, for the men commend their wives during their absence from home to their own brothers for masculine attention'.[1]

Knox agrees with Baldaeus when he says: 'In this Countrey each Man, even the greatest, hath but one Wife, but a Woman often has two Husbands'.[2]

These accounts are corroborated by Ribeiro. His description runs as follows: 'A girl makes a contract to marry a man of her own caste (for she cannot marry outside it), and if the relatives are agreeable they give a banquet and unite the betrothed couple. The next day a brother of the husband takes his place, and if there are seven brothers she is the wife of all of them, distributing the nights by turns, without the husband having a greater right than any of his brothers. If during the day any of them find the chamber unoccupied,

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1. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 384.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

he can retire with the woman if he thinks fit, and while he is within no one else can enter'.[1]

Heydt (who was an employee of the Dutch East India Company and who had visited Kandy only once or twice) also refers to the practice of polyandry in Ceylon, but, he says, he 'cannot remember to have seen this'.[2] Nevertheless, subsequently he suggests the possibility of polyandrous marriages in Ceylon: 'Yet this much I can affirm, that the men are not jealous, but are glad to allow a good friend to lie with their wife when they are absent; they even beg such, in their absence to entertain their wives, if only their rank is equal and they be not from any lower family. If they are of a higher caste, then it is the more permitted, and no one will think anything of it, let alone evil'.[3]

Writing almost immediately after the fall of Kandy (1815) Davy remarks: 'One woman has frequently two husbands; and I have heard of one having as many as seven. This singular species of polygamy is not confined to any caste or rank; it is more or less general

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1. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 108.
2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.
3. Ibid.

amongst the high and low, the rich and poor'.[1]

Apart from these accounts[2] Sinhalese literary works too make it abundantly clear that polyandry was a definite institution in Kandyan times. Nīti nighanduva fully recognizes fraternal polyandry and terms it an 'associated marriage', (samagi vivāhaya).[3] Further it goes on to discuss the general rules and customs which had to be observed by the persons who wished to contract such a marriage. It lays down that when the parents have given their daughter in marriage to a particular person, that person cannot live in associated marriage with the hope of obtaining assistance (from a co-husband) or in order to keep the parental estate intact, without the consent of his wife.[4] This statement not only gives us a complete picture of the woman's place in a polyandrous

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.

2. Von Der Behr, who was a German serving the Dutch East India Company and who seems to have travelled extensively in Ceylon, comments that Sinhalese 'commit incest' not only with 'their brother's wife' but also with 'other near relations'. Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol. 1, p. 8.

3. There was a tendency for a polyandrous marriage to change into a group-marriage, for Nīti nighanduva states: 'It is also a frequent custom for two or three men to have two or three wives in common'. (Eng. tr.), p. 22.

4. Nīti nighanduva, pp. 24, 25.

marriage but also indicates that polyandry was a widely prevalent custom in Kandyan times.

Rājāvaliya uses different terms to denote this custom.

> Vijayabā rajjuruvot rājasiṃha rajjuruvot ..... ekatäna ekadōliya saraṇapāvāgena visuvōya, king Vijayabāhu and king Rājasiṃha lived in one place and cohabited with one woman.[1]
>
> Sri rājasiṃha rajjuruvan hā vijayabāhu rajjuruvan ekagei hindinā avadiyaṭa, king Srī Rājasiṃha and king Vijayabāhu whilst living together in one house...[2]

These references in Rājāvaliya once again draw our attention to Davy's observation on Kandyan polyandry: '... it is more or less general amongst the high and low, the rich and poor'.[3] Moreover they suggest that polyandry was a recognized practice even among royalty.

Pädurē haṭana, a poem belonging to the latter part of the Kandyan period, refers to two brothers who brought whatever they earned to the same house (ekatänaṭana sari kaḷa). Even at present the custom of fraternal polyandry survives in a few out of the way places of the

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1. Rājāvaliya, (Eng. tr.), p. 78.
2. Ibid, p. 82.
3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.

Kandyan provinces and this term is sometimes used to denote it.[1]

It is clear that in the majority of polyandrous marriages, the husbands were brothers;[2] and it was only among brothers that such a practice could survive.

The children born of a polyandrous marriage usually addressed all the joint husbands of their mother as father. In the words of Davy 'the children called the eldest brother 'great papa' and the younger 'little papa'.[3] The Sinhalese equivalent for these would be loku tāttā and punci tāttā. It is interesting to note

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1. Terms such as ekagei raksā venavā, literally, 'earn a living in the same house', and ekagei kanava, 'eating at the same house' are also sometimes used. See E.B. Denham, Ceylon at the Census of 1911, pp. 329, 330.

2. The comment of Knox runs as follows: 'For it is lawful and common with them for two brothers to keep house with one wife'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286. 'The children of a polyandrous marriage were considered the offspring of all the husbands, without regard to any physical conditions, such as non-possibility of access on the part of one or more of them; no system of apportioning the offspring seems to have been in vogue. In respect of property, ... each husband was regarded as having a separate marriage with the joint wife'. Frederic Austin Hayley, A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, pp. 172, 173.

that according to the Sinhalese kinship terminology even if one's father was not living in polyandry with his brothers, one had to use a similar term when addressing an uncle, i.e. nahappā or bāppā according to whether he was elder or younger than one's father. These terms had exactly the same meaning as 'great papa' (loku tāttā), or 'little papa' (punci tāttā) which would have been used if one's father had been living in polyandry with his brothers. In other words according to the Sinhalese kinship terminology one had to call one's father's elder brother nahappā (great father) and younger brother bāppā (little father) even if they had separate wives. Perhaps this is indicative of the fact that polyandry had been a socially approved custom among the Sinhalese for quite a long time.

A variety of causes seem to have contributed to the prevalence of this custom, because it was capable of fulfilling a variety of purposes. It is commonly believed that poverty encouraged the Sinhalese to contract polyandrous marriages. This may be true to a certain extent; but there is enough evidence to show that polyandry was not a custom which prevailed among the poor alone. As has been already said Rājāvaliya indicates the prevalence of this custom even among the members of royal

families.[1] Both rich and poor seem to have practised polyandry and both had their own reasons to justify it. Davy observes how they attempt to justify this practice: 'The apology of the poor is, that they cannot afford each to have a particular wife; and of the wealthy and men of rank, that such a union is politic, and unites families, concentrates property and influence, and conduces to the interest of the children, who having two fathers, will be better taken care of, and will still have a father though they may lose one'.[2]

It is clear that the economic and other reasons given here hold good in the case of both rich and poor alike. By living with one wife in polyandry, they were able to retain their ancestral lands undivided.[3] If each had a separate wife the tendency was for the parental estate to be split among the heirs of various brothers, but such a partition of property was uneconomic, for it would make the poor poorer and the rich less rich.

It is also evident that the rājakāriya or the system of forced labour which existed during the Kandyan

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1. See supra, p.233.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.
3. See Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 161; Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 114.

period promoted polyandry to a considerable extent. Knox describes how the king (Rājasiṃha II) often employed his people in 'vast works' that required years to finish.[1] Furthermore, Rājasiṃha II seems to have had a peculiar dislike of his court officials enjoying the company of their wives when they were in the city. Referring to the king's court, Knox says: 'Therefore when any are admitted to his court to wait upon him they are not permitted to enjoy the company of their wives, no more than any other woman. Neither hath he suffered any for near this twenty years to have their wives in the city, except slaves or inferior servants'.[2]

Under these circumstances men engaged in rājakāriya cannot afford to marry and have wives for themselves, for at any time they may be called upon to go to a distant place to work for the king for long periods without even adequate compensation. In the majority of such cases the men will have no other alternative but to 'commend their wives during their absence from home to their own brothers for masculine attention'.[3]

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 70.
2. Ibid, p. 60.
3. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 384.

Apart from the system of forced labour, economic pursuits such as chena cultivation seem to have contributed to the prevalence of polyandry. During the period which came in between sprouting of the crops and the harvesting, the cultivator had to protect his chena from the elephants, boars and various other animals which usually came to ravage the crops at night. For this purpose he had to stay out on the chena-land throughout the night for a considerable period.[1] If a woman had two brothers as her husbands, each of them could stay at home with her in turn, which meant that the common wife had at least one husband with her most of the time. But this arrangement seems to have given rise to some practical difficulties at times; to these the author of Pädurē haṭana attempts to draw the reader's attention.

Pädurē haṭana is a satirical ballad which narrates a simple story regarding two brothers, Ranhamy and Pinhamy, who lived in their parental house with a

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1. Davy, giving an account of chena cultivation, states: '... no sooner is the surface thus cleared, than the ground is dug up and sown. During the whole time the crop is in the ground, it is nightly watched to defend it from wild animals, as deer, hogs and elephants which abound in most parts of the country, and are the farmer's greatest enemies'. An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 270.

common wife. According to the arrangement they had made, one was to spend the night in the hut (pāla) guarding the chena land against wild animals, while the other enjoyed the company of the joint wife at home. They carried on this practice for some time, distributing the nights by turns. The arrangement worked well until at last Ranhamy got tired of it. Contrary to the understanding, Ranhamy came back from the chena land one night, and began to address his younger brother from the garden. Here the poet puts into his mouth a series of verses. Pinahmy, who was happily sleeping inside the house with the common wife, hearing what his brother said, began to reply in a retaliatory tone, reminding Ranhamy about the agreement they had previously made. Pädurē haṭana gives this conversation at some length, devoting to it about sixteen verses, of which we cite two:

Ranhamy: pälē pilē tada sītē vevlanavā
koṭṭē makunanṭa nage lē nadivenavā
gedara pädura ätivat nana kanburanavā
nalē pälaṭa pala nana pädураṭa enavā.

When I was in the hut, it was so cold that I began to shiver. The bugs infesting the pillow would not find enough blood in me. Even though there is a mat at home I have to suffer here in vain. Dear brother, please

go to the hut; I want to lie on the mat at home.[1]

Pinhamy: hēnē bōga ṭika val ali talannē
pälē koṭṭe ada horu aragena yannē
pinhāmyi ada pädurē lagiṅnē
ranhāmyyō ohomada päl rakinnē.

Wild elephants may be destroying the crops now. The pillow which is in the hut is sure to be stolen by thieves. It is Pinhamy's turn to lie on the mat today. Ranhamy! is that the way you guard the chena-land at night.[2]

Like most of the other Sinhalese poets, the author of Pädurē haṭana cleverly cloth his thoughts in symbols and similes. Pädurē haṭana literally means 'quarrel over the mat'. The mat here is a symbol which represents the wife or sexual union. However, the idea the poet attempts to convey is quite clear. Ranhamy, who should have been at the hut, had come back home ready with a set of lame excuses, expressing the desire to lie on the mat at home (obviously in the company of their wife), entirely ignoring the fact that it was his turn to guard the crops. Pinhamy, who had no intention of giving up his right, cooly reminded him about the previous agreement they had come to. But later finding that Ranhamy was

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1. Pädurē haṭana, v. 12.

2. Ibid, v. 13.

persistent, Pinhamy abused the former so coarsely, that he left home immediately for good, thus making Pinhamy the sole master of the house. It seems clear that Pädurë haṭana is an attempt to describe an actual incident which put an end to a polyandrous marriage, rather than a fictitious story.[1]

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1. At the British museum library there are several poems of this kind, evidently written to satirise some local events; Balal kaṭāva, or. 6611 (222), Kanavän dun haṭana, or. 6611 (243), Nikini kaṭāva, or. 6611 (237), and Gana haṭana, or. 6611 (199), are some of the most interesting ones.

Every Sinhalese being 'more or less a poet' as Davy says, there had been a practice in Kandyan times of composing ballads on interesting local events. Rājāvaliya states that 'the Atapattu Ārachchi in charge of the 12 companies of lascars of the Maha Atapattu, composed songs with the refrain kokkanama at the end of each verse', to ridicule Mannamperuma Mohottila, and that 'people began to recite these songs throughout all the streets of Sītāwaka'. Rājāvaliya, (Eng. tr.), p. 96.

Knox mentions that during his stay at Kandy, there had been a ballad composed on one Lewis Tissera who 'swore he would make the king eat Coracan Tallipa, that is a kind of hasty Pudding, made of Water and the Coracan flower; which is reckoned the worst fare of that Island'. Knox goes on to say that 'the king afterwards took this Lewis Tissera, and put him in Chains in the Common Goal, (sic) and made him eat of the same fare. And there is a Ballad of this Man and this passage, Sung much among the common People there to this day'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 285.

Disturbed political conditions also may have contributed to the prevalence of polyandry in Kandyan times. Almost all the Kandyan kings were constantly engaged in some war or other. As a result most of the menfolk were on call for military service. Under these circumstances, soldiers, unlike men of other professions, could not hope to remain in their native village for long periods with their families.

Writing concerning the Sinhalese soldiers Knox says: 'The soldiers of the High-Lands called Conde Uda, are dispersed all over the land, so that one scarcely knows the other'.[1] Moreover, once the king sends out an army of soldiers for a particular military operation, 'they dare not return, altho (sic) they have performed and finished the Business they were sent upon, until a special order and command to call them'.[2]

Thus it becomes clear that the Sinhalese soldiers

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 88.
2. Ibid, p. 89.

could not have led the life of normal family men.[1] But the institution of polyandry provided a ready solution to this problem. By joining some other person's family as a joint husband a soldier was able to free himself from bachelorhood as well as from the cumbrous task of maintaining a family. It is interesting to note that some Sinhalese poems describe the soldier (hēvārāla) as an adulterer whose heart and eyes are

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1. When not engaged in actual fighting, soldiers in Kandyan times were called upon to perform various non-military duties. According to Davy soldiers 'were liable to be called on to labour at certain public works, as in making roads, levelling hills, and excavating tanks; and, according to the extent of their land-tenures, they might be employed annually in such services, from fifteen to thirty days. Farther, the presence of all, or of certain classes of them, was required on the four great festivals held annually in the capital; and, on all public occasions of moment, as the choosing of a king, a royal marriage, or burial'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 115; See also Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 91.

set on other people's wives.[1]

The following verse describes the sorrows of a person who had to endure separation from his wife, on account of being called for military service.

When about to leave, he addresses his wife thus:

noyek rupun his binda puruduya nenaṭa
bayak kiyā deyakut nodānēya naṭa
kunak unat naṭa kan näta in nubaṭa
räyak pālu näta nalayā nisāvaṭa

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1. Purāṇa kōlam kavipota puts the following verse into the mouth of a soldier.

gōkaṭa asuvī bäṭa kā adava giyat novēya kaṭa
bōkoṭa sen sanaga yudaṭa gampola nuvaraṭa giya viṭa
ē raṭa sen sanaga sädī depila bedī koṭanā viṭa
enaviṭa nage muhunaṭa van kaḍu paharin ädauni kaṭa

The crookedness of my mouth is not due to a thrashing I received after getting caught in a house (as an adulterer). I went with a great army to the city of Gampola, and we fought a severe battle with the armies of that country. When thus engaged in fighting, a blow given with a sword struck my face. Thereafter my mouth has remained crooked. Purāṇa kōlam kavipota v. 131.

'Getting caught in a house', (gēkaṭa asuvīna) seems to have had a special meaning in Kandyan times. This term was solely used in reference to an adulterer who gets caught in the company of some one else's wife. (See Sinhalē vidupota p. 39). Regarding this matter Knox states: 'It is a Law here, that if a Man catch another in Bed with his wife, he may, be it whosoever, kill him and her if he please'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 147.

> I am well versed in the art of cutting off heads of enemies. I know not what fear is. Do not worry what my fate is going to be. You will not feel lonely even for a night, since the brother is there.[1]

Here, the man addressing his wife does not give us an indication as to which brother he is referring to in the fourth line. But according to the context it cannot be any other than one of his own brothers, who must have been bound by a polyandrous marriage with a common wife.

There is a Sinhalese ola of gift dated saka 1729 (1807) by which five soldiers, Gamaätirala, Daksahēvāyā, Āgirihēvāyā, Mananahēvāyā, and Puncihēvāyā distribute their ancestral lands among their dependents.[2] The deed does not state that these soldiers had been living with a common wife. But the fact that they had been enjoying their lands together and refer to their dependents as 'our little ones' goes to show that they were five brothers who had taken a joint wife. There is no doubt as to whether these men were soldiers, as at the end of the deed they are referred to as 'aforesaid soldiers' (ihata kī hēvā pirisa); and their names too indicate this, for hēvāyā means a soldier.

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1. Jana kav kalamba, p. 14.

2. Saparagamuvē pärani liyavili, p. 85.

With the help of casual references like these we can ascertain that polyandry was a popular institution among Sinhalese military men. Behind almost every Sinhalese custom there was a social need.

The prevalence of the institution of polyandry in Kandyan times may also be connected with the disturbed balance of the sexes. A shortage of women will naturally mean that some men will be left without partners. Davy states that there was a numerical disproportion between the sexes among the Ceylonese population in the period immediately after the fall of Kandy. According to the statistics he puts forward, the excess of males over females was 27,193. Davy further states: 'The disproportion appears to be greatest in the poorest parts of the country, where the population is thinnest, and it is most difficult to support life; and smallest where there is least want. Indeed, in some fishing-villages, where there is abundance of food, the number of females rather exceeds that of the males'.[1] It appears as if Davy means to say that an excess of the males over females prevailed especially towards the interior of the island, where the population was thin and where of course the practice of polyandry flourished.

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 107.

Then the question arises as to what factors brought about this numerical disproportion between the sexes among the Sinhalese, which in turn promoted the custom of polyandry. Knox, Heydt, D'Oyly and many other distinguished authorities are unanimously agreed that infanticide was practised in the Kandyan provinces. But they do not specifically say that only female children were put to death. According to them the victims were children born under unlucky stars. The Sinhalese believed in astrology, and as soon as a child was born parents noted down the time and had a horoscope cast by an astrologer almost immediately. The predictions of the astrologer were based on the planetary positions at the time of the birth, and it was believed that a person's disposition and capabilities depended on the position of the planets at the time of his birth. The accounts of Knox, Heydt and D'Oyly do not permit us to assume that only female children came to be looked upon as a misfortune. These writers say that the Sinhalese sometimes put to death any child who was believed to have been born in an inauspicious hour. The following is the account of Knox: 'As soon as the child is born, the Father or some Friend apply themselves to an Astrologer to enquire, whether the Child be born in a prosperous Planet, and a good hour or in an evil. If it be found

to be in an evil they presently destroy it'.[1] Heydt's account is somewhat similar: 'They greatly esteem astrologers ... and as soon as the child is born the father or nearest friend goes to such a one and asks if it is a lucky star in which the child was born. If the astrologer says yes, the child is very carefully reared, if no, and if an unlucky sign be present it is little cherished; and they even think little of killing such a child or of getting rid of it in some manner'.[2] D'Oyly agrees with Knox and Heydt when he says that infanticide 'was a very common practice after three or four children are born under an unlucky näkata'.[3]

Looking at the foregoing evidence we may conclude that it was not only female children who were put to death by their parents, but any children who were supposed to have been born in an inauspicious

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 150, 151.
2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 136.
3. John D'Oyly, Diary, ed. by H.W. Codrington, p. 58.

hour.[1] Thus there is little or no reason to connect the practice of polyandry which prevailed in Kandyan times with the practice of infanticide.[2]

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1. Attention may be drawn here to the following interesting verse often sung by Sinhalese astrologers even at present:

   hatara kēndarē pāluva upan ekā

   bahiravayāta bilidīnaṭa upan ekā

   One born with a horoscope which is blank in the four places, is the one born to be sacrified to the bahiravaya

   Undoubtedly this verse refers to a belief the Sinhalese once held. It testifies to the fact that infanticide had been practised during an earlier age; yet it does not indicate that the victims were always females. In fact, authorities hold that when making a human sacrifice to the demon bahiravaya, a boy was preferred to a girl. See L.D. Barnett, Alphabetical Guide to Sinhalese Folklore p. 10.

2. What we hear from Davy about the practice of infanticide is contrary to all the above quoted authorities: 'The result of my enquiries is, that they hold the crime in abhorrence; and, that it is never commited, excepting in some of the wildest parts of the country; and never from choice, but necessity, - when the parents themselves are on the brink of starving, and either sacrifice a part of the family or die altogether'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 289.

(g) Polygamy

The information we have on the subject of polygamy is meagre compared to the mass of material available on the institution of polyandry. However, we cannot by any means establish that polygamy was abhorred in Kandyan times, for the fact that it prevailed to a certain extent is proved beyond doubt by references in the works of European and Sinhalese writers.

That the Sinhalese kings were generally polygamous from very early times is clear from the Mahāvaṃsa, the Cūlavaṃsa and the other chronicles. The harem (antaḥpura) is often referred to in these works.[1] But nothing definite can be said about its size. However, as far as the Kandyan kings are concerned it may be said that their harems were not large. This is brought out by the works of well informed authorities.

Of Rājasiṃha II (1635-1687), Knox says: 'Concubines he keepeth not many'.[2] Knox further portrays that king as a person who was 'temperate both in his Diet and his Lust'.[3] Davy gives the number of queens

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1. Mahāvaṃsa, p. 122; Cūlavaṃsa, part I, p. 85.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 57.
3. Ibid, p. 59.

Srī Vijaya Rājasiṃha (1739-1747) had as three.[1] His successor Kīrti Srī Rājasiṃha (1747-1782) is said to have had 'several queens',[2] while the number of queens Rājādhi Rājasiṃha (1782-1798) had is given as five.[3] According to Marshall the last Kandyan king, Srī Vikrama Rājasiṃha (1798-1815), had four queens.[4]

While almost all the authorities are agreed that the Kandyan kings were polygamous, opinions seem to be divided as to the prevalence of polygamy as an established institution among the ordinary people.

In this connexion Baldaeus observes: 'Cingalezen .... are polygamists and marry as many wives as they can'.[5] This statement is corroborated by Queyroz who states: '... one single man may marry many sisters'.[6] Davy agrees with Baldaeus and Queyroz as to the existence of polygamy in the Kandyan provinces, but he concludes

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 309.
2. Ibid, p. 310.
3. Ibid, p. 311.
4. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and Its Inhabitants, pp. 120, 121.
5. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 385.
6. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 91. Vinanavastuprakaranaya mentions a person who married two sisters, Bhadra and Subhadrā, p. 89.

that polyandry was much more general than polygamy in Kandyan times: '... a plurality of husbands is much more common than of wives'.[1]

Nīti nighanḍuva recognizes polygamy as a custom which prevailed at the time, and goes on to discuss the general rules which had to be observed by a person who wished to enter into conjugal relations with more than one woman at a time: 'It is frequently the custom in this country for one man to have at the same time a number of wives ... The husband has the power, without regard to the consent of his first wife to marry others as he pleases. But, although he has such power, if the first wife be unwilling, she can obtain a divorce'.[2]

The foregoing views perhaps create the impression that polygamy was a common practice in Kandyan times. However there are other authorities who hold quite a different view on the subject.

For example Knox makes the following observation in this connection: 'In this Countrey each Man, even the greatest, hath but one Wife'.[3] Knox was not the sole authority who was inclined to think this. Writing

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.
2. Nīti nighanḍuva (Eng. tr.), p. 22.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 150.

concerning the marriage customs of the Sinhalese Heydt remarks: 'I have never heard that they may marry more than one wife, though among other Eastern nations it is usual that they may have so many wives'.[1] Marshall making a casual reference to the custom of polygamy observes that the Sinhalese entertained a plurality of wives only very rarely.[2]

Thus we see that there was a variety of opinion among various writers of the period regarding the practice of polygamy. Perhaps this is indicative of the fact that it was not a widely prevalent custom among the Sinhalese.

It is somewhat surprising to find that the custom of polygamy was not as widespread as the custom of polyandry in Kandyan times, in spite of the fact that the centuries prior to the fall of Kandy brought Ceylon much into contact with South India, where there were numerous Hindu castes and tribes which practised polygamy. Undoubtedly Hinduism wielded a great influence on the Sinhalese population in Kandyan times, and the Sinhalese even adopted some of the marriage rites of

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.

2. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and Its Inhabitants, p. 170.

the Hindus. However, the Sinhalese marriage remained a simple affair,[1] never greatly influenced by the sacramental nature of the Hindu marriage. No religious functionary was required for the purpose of solemnizing a Sinhalese marriage, and even the tying together of the fingers of bride and bridegroom was done by the bride's uncle.[2] On the other hand, the Hindu marriage was of a sacramental nature, the primary object of which was the begetting of a son. It is this son (Putra), who saves his father from hell (Put)[3] and continues the family line. This being the case, many of the Hindu sacred books permitted the supersession of the first wife by a second wife, if the former failed to bear a son. In point of fact, this supersession was permitted on other grounds too,[4] thus, theoretically at least, sanctioning the custom of polygamy. However, since the

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 286.

2. Nīti nighanḍuva, p. 19.

3. Manu-Smrti (Eng. tr.), p. 123.

4. 'The barren wife shall be superseded in the eighth year; in the tenth she whose children die off; in the eleventh she who bears only daughters; but immediately she who talks harshly'. - Manu-Smrti (Eng. tr.), pp. 68, 69.

Sinhalese marriage bore only a contractual character[1] in contrast to the sacramental character of the Hindu marriage, a Sinhalese who wished to get rid of his wife because of her sterility or perverse temper, or on any other ground, was at liberty to divorce her.[2] In other words, a Sinhalese was not obliged to live with two wives, one of whom he did not like, in polygamy, because he was free to dismiss the one he did not want to live with. In spite of the Hindu influence which was deeply felt in Kandyan times, this laxity of the marital tie remained unchanged right through the Kandyan period. Here we find one of the important factors which prevented the custom of polygamy from becoming widespread in Kandyan ~~society~~ times.

Economic reasons also may have prevented the custom of polygamy from becoming a well established institution. Polygamy is not likely to thrive amongst a people who seek to contract polyandrous marriages on

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1. '.... the bridegroom-elect sends a present to the Parents of the Bride, an article for each as a token of the contract..... among them there is no stable matrimony nor union except so long as they like'. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 90.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.

economic grounds.[1] The practice of polyandry 'has been extenuated on the plea, that it prevents the subdivision of estates'[2] and provides a mate for those who 'cannot afford each to have a particular wife'.[3] Knox and Queyroz recount the poverty of the ordinary folk quite often: 'Their Poverty is so great, that their ability will not reach to buy such Apparel as they do desire to wear'.[4] 'In Ceylon .... the kings were the heirs of the vassals, taking everything from them on death and giving to the children what they pleased, and those who were most tyrannical in their government used to despoil them of their goods even during their lifetime, and sometimes even of their lives. Wherefore they lived in great poverty'.[5]

Even though polygamy appears to have been a socially approved custom, an ordinary Sinhalese who lived under such unfavourable conditions of existence naturally had to be contented with one wife; and if he

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1. See supra, p.236.
2. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 429.
3. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 287.
4. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 144.
5. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 98.

was too poor to have even one, the only thing he could do was to join some other person's family as a joint husband.

An exaggerated fear of security seems to have induced many women to marry a man with a number of brothers and subsequently to become the wife of all of them rather than become an only son's only wife, or one of his wives: '.. the woman who is married to a husband with a large number of brothers is considered very fortunate, for all toil and cultivate for her and bring whatever they earn to the house, and she lives much honoured and well supported'.[1] It could be argued that if it was considered fortunate to become a joint wife in a polyandrous marriage, to become a co-wife of a polygamous marriage may have been considered a misfortune. The more husbands, the better the match. This seems to have been one of the important principles which guided some parents when contracting a marriage for their daughter.

Behind the custom of polyandry there was a definite social need. But this cannot be said of the custom of polygamy, for it had no special purpose to fulfil in the Sinhalese society.

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1. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p. 108.

Evidence indicates that even the rich, who had the means to marry more than one woman at a time, seldom did so. Curiously enough it was among the rich that the custom of polyandry throve with greatest vigour: '... the revolting practice of polyandry prevails throughout the interior of Ceylon, chiefly amongst the wealthier classes'.[1]

Millēva, one of the most distinguished among the Sinhalese chiefs, who 'had excellent natural talents, and who was distinguished for sagacity and acuteness of intellect', lived with his brother in polyandry.[2] Since there is evidence to indicate that the custom of polyandry prevailed even among the members of royal families,[3] it would not be unreasonable to suggest that if the Sinhalese rich had any inclination to deviate from monogamy, the swing was towards polyandry and not

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1. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 428.

2. Henry Marshall, Ceylon - A General Description of the Island and Its Inhabitants, p. 124.

3. See supra, p.233.

towards polygamy.[1]

Thus we see that the custom of polygamy was not as widespread as the custom of polyandry, in spite of the fact that it was a socially approved institution in Kadyan times.

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1. However, the practice of 'keeping a woman' (gāniyak tiyāgannavā) or concubinage was prevalent among the rich who could afford it. (See supra, pp. 187 ff.) In the mid Kandyan period there was a fairly rigid distinction between extra-marital sexual intercourse and the ritual union of marriage. Knox and all the other writers who lived amongst the Sinhalese for long periods were able to distinguish formal marriage from concubinage (Knox, pp. 105, 150). Hence their reluctance to assert that the Sinhalese were polygamous. But it appears that towards the latter part of the Kandyan period, the formalities required for a legal marriage were not followed in detail. This in turn increased the slenderness of the marital tie; as a result of which the sharp distinction which existed between regular marriage and concubinage seems to have been considerably modified. And some writers have not seen any difference between the two.

(h) Divorce and Re-marriage

Although in Kandyan times parental interference limited the choice of marriage partners considerably,[1] the freedom thus lost appears to have been somewhat counterbalanced by the ease with which a divorce could be effected. There were neither special ceremonies nor official divorce proceedings in this connexion, and at the mere wish of either party a marriage could be dissolved. In this connexion Knox states: '... their Marriages are but of little force or validity. For if they disagree and mislike one the other; they part without disgrace'.[2] Queyroz agrees with Knox when he states: '... in order to separate, each one's wish is sufficient, who taking what was brought to the household may go back and marry at pleasure'.[3] This evidence is corroborated by Heydt : '... when they cannot live with content together, they separate themselves, and the man seeks another wife and the wife another husband, until they find such as content them both'.[4]

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1. See supra, p.178 ff
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.
3. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 91.
4. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.

These references make it clear that if the pair failed to satisfy one another's needs separation automatically followed. Yet they do not afford us much information regarding the main grounds on which divorce was permissible in Kandyan times. 'Answers given by some of the best-informed Candian Priests, to Questions put to them by Governor Falk, in the year 1769, respecting the antient Laws and Customs of their Country', are more useful in that respect.

According to that source a husband could obtain a divorce for any of the following reasons, namely: '... that his wife, failing in the respect and reverence due to a husband, has spoken to him in an unbecoming manner; or that, being void of attachment to him, she has bestowed upon another that affection and regard to which he was entitled; or that she maintains an intercourse with a gallant, and lavishes upon him the earnings of her husband'.[1] The same source states that a wife could obtain a divorce for the following faults on the part of the husband: 'If, being destitute of love and affection

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1. Answers given by some of the best-informed Candian Priests, to questions put to them by Governor Falk, in the year 1769, respecting the antient Laws and Customs of their Country in Anthony Bertolacci's A view of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, Appendix, A, pp. 468, 469.

for his wife, he witholds from her the wearing apparel and ornaments suitable to her rank; if he does not provide her with food of such a quality as she has a right to; if he neglects to acquire money by agriculture, commerce, and other honourable means; if, associating with other women, he squanders his property upon them; if he makes a practice of commiting other improper and degrading acts, such as stealing, lying, or drinking intoxicating liquors; if he treat his wife as a slave, and at the same time behaves respectfully to other women; ... the wife may obtain a divorce'.[1]

It is interesting to note that barrenness of the wife or her failure to bear a son was not considered a ground for divorce, although it was one of the important causes for the dissolution of many marriages among the Hindu castes and tribes. The reason for this however, is obvious. As has already been said, the begetting of a son was considered to be the primary object of the Hindu marriage, and it was this son who saved his father from hell by making the necessary sacrifices after his death. But in a Sinhalese family the son had no such special part to play; and although some Sinhalese may have desired at least one son to take over the role of

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1. Anthonly Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, Appendix A, p. 469.

the father in protecting the economic and social interests of the household, there were others, it seems, who never desired children at all: 'And for the matter of being with Child, which many of them do not desire, they very exquisitely can prevent the same'.[1] In the circumstances it is not surprising to find that the barrenness of the wife, or her failure to bear a son, was not considered a ground for divorce. The other striking factor is that adultery was a frequent ground for divorce, in spite of the latitude and licence[2] which appears to have been socially recognized in Kandyan times.

It is noteworthy that the rules on the subject of divorce varied according to the nature of the marriage contracted, for in Kandyan times there were two basic types of marriage, binna and dīga.[3]

A man who contracted a binna marriage was

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 146.

2. 'In some Cases the Men will permit their Wives and Daughters to lye with other Men. And that is, when intimate Friends or great Men chance to lodge at their houses, they commonly will send their Wives or Daughters to bear them company in their Chamber. Neither do they reckon their Wives to be Whores for lying with them that are as good or better than themselves'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 147, 148.

3. Supra, p. 205 ff.

expected to take permanent residence at the parental house of his wife, and if the parents of the latter subsequently desired to get rid of their son-in-law, it was always in their power to dismiss him without the consent of the daughter.[1]

But in doing so the following rule had to be observed: 'The son-in-law ... whom the father brought into his premises and married in Bini, cannot be sent away by the mother, nor can the son-in-law, who was brought in to the premises of the mother and married in Bini at her instance, be sent away by the father'.[2]

In the dīga marriage, the wife went to live in her conjugal home, and the position of the husband was secure. The union itself appears to have been more stable, for even the parents of the wife could not dissolve a dīga marriage once they had given their consent to it.[3] However, if that consent was obtained by means of threats, use of force or fraud, the parents of the woman were at liberty to dissolve the marriage and take away their daughter on the plea that their consent was obtained

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1. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 21.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

through unfair means.[1]

Since there was no community of property between the husband and wife under either of the two types of marriage, on the dissolution of a marriage the wife could take away the dowry she brought with her,[2] as well as the property acquired by her after marriage.[3] If the wife had acquired any landed property, it remained under her management on her divorce.[4] On the other hand she could take away nothing that belonged to the husband if she was leaving contrary to his wish, and she 'must even leave her wearing apparel which she had received from her husband, if that were but her

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1. Nīti nighanḍuva, p. 21.

2. 'They do give according to their Ability a Portion of Cattle, slaves and Money with their Daughters; but if they chance to mislike one another and part asunder, this Portion must be returned again'. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149. 'They make ... little ado in their divorces, but the wife takes with her the dowry that she brought'. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.

3. Sawers in Frederic Austin Hayley's A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, Appendix I, p. 35.

4. Ibid.

only cloth'.[1] If there was any property acquired by the husband and wife in common, it had to be equally divided between them.[2]

If the wife had contracted any debts for the maintenance of the family, the husband was liable for them. But the wife was not liable for the debts of her husband. However, if any such debt was contracted with the consent of the wife who made herself security for it, she was liable for it.[3]

Regarding the disposal of children on the dissolution of a marriage Knox says: '... if they have

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1. Sawers in Frederic Austin Hayley's A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, Appendix I, p. 35. 'If a divorce be effected in accordance with the wishes of the wife, or of the members of the family, but against the will of the husband, nothing whatever belonging to the husband can be taken away, even the cloth given by him should be returned'. Niti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 24.

2. Niti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 24. However, according to another source the property acquired by the husband during the period of the union was equally divided between the two parties. Anthony Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, Appendix A, pp. 469, 470.

3. Sawers in Frederic Austin Hayley's A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, Appendix I, p. 35.; Niti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.) p. 23.

Children when they part, the Common Law is, the Males for the Man, and the Females for the Woman'.[1]

Queyroz agrees with Knox when he says: '... if they have children, the males are entrusted to the Father and the females to the Mother'.[2] However even on this subject the rules appear to have varied according to the nature of the union.

According to Nīti nighanduva, if a husband of a binna marriage was dismissed by his wife or relations, or if he left his wife on his own accord, he had no claim to the children born of the union.[3] However, if the husband was originally living with his wife in his own premises as though in dīga marriage, and subsequently at the request of the wife's parents converted the union into a binna marriage by coming to live at his wife's residence, the husband could claim any male child born in his own premises, the reason being that he was the issue of an original dīga connection.[4]

In the case of a dīga marriage, the rules

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.
2. Fernao De Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Book I, p. 91.
3. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 25.
4. Ibid.

regarding the custody of the children depended on the cause of dissolution of the marriage. If the wife left her husband contrary to his wish, the latter could either take charge of all the children or hand over a few of them to the wife.[1] But if the husband assumed the initiative in bringing about the divorce without a sufficient cause, the wife could leave all the children with the husband, refusing to bring up any.[2]

According to the law of inheritance existing in Kandyan times these children did not lose the rights of inheritance in the landed and personal property of their parents: 'Notwithstanding the divorce of their parents, the children are, according to established usage, entitled to inherit both their landed and personal property. In the case, however, of their parents' marrying again, one half of that property is, upon such occasion, transferred to the children of the first marriage. If there is no issue from the second marriage, the remainder of their property reverts to the children of the first; otherwise it goes to the children of the

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1. '... if there be two or three children, one of them - or, if there be four or five, two children - can be given into the charge of the mother'. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 25.

2. Ibid., p.

second'.[1]

If the wife was repudiated during her pregnancy, and if she were not the party at fault, the husband was bound to maintain her in food and clothing for six months.[2] In this connection there was a maxim which said that 'the wife divorced when pregnant shall have six months food and clothing'.[3] However, the husband was not bound to support his divorced pregnant wife if she alone was responsible for the dissolution of the marriage. According to Sawers the gansabāva (the village council) could award maintenance to a divorcee who was pregnant, until the child was old enough to be handed over to the charge of the husband.[4]

Having seen the ease with which a divorce could be effected, one would rightly expect to find that no

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1. Anthony Bertolacci, A View of the Agricultural Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon, pp. 470, 471.

2. Sawers in Frederic Austin Hayley's A Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Sinhalese, Appendix I, p. 35.

3. Ibid.

4. It is noteworthy that although according to the law of inheritance which existed in Kandyan times, a daughter given away in diga marriage was not entitled to any portion of the landed property of her parents, if she was divorced and forced to return to the parental home, she was entitled to receive maintenance from her brothers who inherited the parental lands. Nīti nighanduva (Eng. Tr.), p. 64.

stigma was attached to divorced parties in Kandyan times. Our evidence not only indicates that they suffered no social stigma, but also suggests that both parties were free to marry again: 'They make ... little ado in their divorces, but the wife takes with her the dowry that she brought, ... and goes to her parents or nearest relatives or other friends, until she sees another opportunity better to her liking than the first; and this many do very often, even 4, 5 times and more, until they think that they are satisfied to their contentment. That she has had other husbands is little slur on her: on the contrary, she is as well respected as any other'.[1]

However, in connection with such a re-marriage very few ceremonies were observed and the wedding was never celebrated on a grand scale. All that was required was the man to ask the woman whether she was willing to live with him. If she consented the man presented her with the wedding clothes and took her home.[2]

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 135.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 149.

Chapter V

Diseases and their Treatment

It is evident that the Sinhalese possessed a long-standing medical tradition which came down from early times. Indian influence on various aspects of Sinhalese life was quite extensive and there is no doubt that it was the Indian tradition of medicine that prevailed in Ceylon.[1]

The introduction of Buddhism from the mainland of India in the third century B.C. brought Ceylon into closer contact with also northern Indian civilization and culture.[2] From this time onwards there was a steady influx of Indian Buddhist manuscripts into Ceylon, and it is probable that they contained not only the message of the Lord, but also

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1. In this connexion Tennent states: 'Another branch of royal education was medicine. The Singhalese, from their intercourse with the Hindus, had ample opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of this art, which was practised in India before it was known either in Persia or Arabia'.; James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol. I,p.504.; It is noted by Silva that in 'regard to medical science the Sinhalese largely availed themselves of the very comprehensive medical literature current in India'. W.A.De.Silva, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch),1913,XXIII/66,p.34.

2. 'From Asoka's time, religious and cultural intercourse between the Buddhist establishments of Ceylon and those of northern, central and southern India had been maintained uninterruptedly, and monks travelled to and fro between Ceylon and the Indian continent'. History of Ceylon, Vol.I, Part I,p.17.

rudiments of other subjects such as medicine practised in contemporary India. For example, the Mahāvagga has a separate section which deals with diseases and their treatment. It shows that its composer was acquainted with Indian medical works.

In reference to Mahāvagga Jolly observes: '...the old Buddhistic medicine of Mahāvagga...knows the Tridosa, eye-ointment, nasal remedy, horn-scarifying, fomentations (Svedana), oils, Ghrta, lotus-stalks, myrobalans, different kinds of salt, Asafoetida, garglings, maggots in head and even the laparotomy mentioned in the later works'.[1] It is possible that Sinhalese monks who composed medical treatises such as the Bhēsajjamañjūsā drew inspiration from this work. Further, there were many Indian Buddhist monks who were well known as authors of medical works and their works may have been studied by their brethren in Ceylon. In fact it is striking that most of the Sinhalese medical works were produced by Buddhist monks;[2] in spite of the fact that the learning and teaching of such subjects as medicine and astrology was sometimes considered contrary to the spirit of Buddhism.[3]

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1. Julius Jolly, Indian Medicine, p.23.
2. See W.A.De.Silva, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) 1913, XXIII/66, p.34 ff.
3. The Katikāvata issued by Rājādhi Rājasinha in 1788 prohibits the practice of medicine by the monks. Even the earlier Katikāvatas state that it is improper for the monks to practise medicine. See Katikāvat sangarāva, pp.7-33.

By about the fourth century A.D. Mahāyāna had begun to wield considerable influence in the Island. As a result Sanskrit learning, too, spread extensively in Ceylon, for Sanskrit was the language of Mahāyāna School. This in turn brought Ceylon into contact with the Sanskrit literature of India which deals with a wide range of subjects such as medicine. In fact, the first Ceylonese medical treatise we hear of is in Sanskrit. This is Sārārtha sangraha ascribed to king Buddhadāsa (A.D.337-365).

With reference to this work Wijesekara observes: 'It is in this early mediaeval period of Ceylon history that we find the composition of major literary works in Sanskrit by Sinhalese authors. The earliest extant is the famous medical treatise, Sarartha Sangraha by King Buddhadasa in the fourth century A.D. The work shows not only to what extent the medical and surgical knowledge of the Sinhalese depended on the standard Sanskrit works popular in India, but also how clever the Sinhalese were in mastering the sciences of the Hindus'.[1]

By this time the Sinhalese must have been acquainted with the well known Sanskrit works such as the Suśruta saṃhitā. The therapeutics attributed to king Buddhadāsa

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1. The Ceylon Historical Journal, 1951, Vol.I, No.I, p.27.

in the Cūlavaṃsa remind us of the methods of treatment described in Suśruta saṃhitā. For example, the Suśruta saṃhitā says that in 'a case of head-disease due to the germination of parasites (Krimi) in the head, the patient should be made to snuff in a quantity of animal blood. The worms or parasites lured with the smell of the blood, would greedily come down (into the passages of the nostrils) when they should be carefully extracted'.[1]

The Cūlavaṃsa describes how King Buddhadāsa applied the same method of treatment on a patient suffering from a similar ailment: 'He recognized that a reptile was within him, made him fast a week and had him, after being bathed and rubbed with oil, laid on a well prepared bed. Now as he lay there in deep slumber with open mouth, he placed before his mouth a piece of meat with a string attached. (Lured) by the smell the reptile came out of him, bit fast at it and wanted to crawl in (again). Thereupon the King held it fast by means of the string, drew it out, threw it in a jug into water and spake these words...'[2]

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1. Suśruta saṃhitā, ed. and translated by Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhishagratna, Vol.III, p.137.
2. Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, p.12.

The Cūlavaṃsa also indicates King Buddhadāsa's acquaintance with many other methods of treatment such as use of emetics and blood-letting, which have been recommended in Indian medical works.[1] There is no doubt that these curing methods were known even to the ordinary physicians of the day.

We see all the traits of Indian medical tradition persisting through the subsequent periods. The Bhēsajjamañjūsā[2] composed during the reign of Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya (A.D.1236-1271) not only upholds the Indian tradition of medicine but also acknowledges the help it received from the ancient Indian Ṛsis (sages). Being a work in Pāli verse composed for the use of monks it does not deal with such subjects as women's and children's diseases. However the work as a whole appears to be based on Sanskrit models.

The description of curing methods;[3] the explanation of the theory of the three humours;[4] the enumeration of articles of

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1. Cūlavaṃsa, Part I, p.11. cf.Suśruta saṃhitā,Ed. and translated by Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhishagratna,Vol.I,pp.113 ff.,394 ff.
2. This is the first medical work we hear of after King Buddhādasa's Sārārtha sangraha. Its authorship is ascribed to a mahāthēra with the title Panca-mūla-pariveṇādhipati; See G.P.Malalasekera, The Pāli Literature of Ceylon, p.215.
3. Bhēsajjamanjūsā,Ed.K.D.Kulatillaka,Vol.I,pp.7 ff.
4. Ibid.Vol.II,pp.178 ff.; cf.Astāngahrdayasaṃhitā, Tr.C. Vogel,p.62 ff.

food and forms of medical substances[1] and such other subjects appear here essentially the same as those in the works of Indian writers. Moreover the Bhēsajjamanjūsā sometimes refers to Indian medical authorities such as Caraka.[2] With reference to this work Godakumbura observes: 'The Bhēsajjamanjūsā was composed for the use of monks. Sanskrit learning in Ceylon was of a very high standard during the time of its composition, and medical books in that learned language were probably easily available; thus the author may have been able to draw a great deal of material from them'.[3] Mayūrapāda's Yogārnavaya and Prayōgaratnāvaliya also belong to the Dambadeniya period and they, too, are composed along the lines of Indian medical tradition. At the beginning of these works Mayūrapāda relates the legend of the origin of the art of healing as given in many of the classical Sanskrit compilations;[4] and adds that he intends to present that art in the Sinhalese language so that it may be easily accessible to the common people.[5]

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1. Bhēsajjamanjūsā, Vol.I, pp.74 ff.; cf. Suśruta saṃhitā, ed. and translated by Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhishagratna, Vol.I, p.342 ff.
2. Ibid. p.40.
3. C.E. Godakumbura, Sinhalese Literature, p.332.
4. See Yogārnavaya, Ed. Kirialle Nānavimala, Part I, p.2.; Prayōgaratnāvaliya, Ed. Kirialle Nānavimala, p.2.; This is one of the legends given in the Indian medical compilations in order to stress the divine origin of healing art.
5. Yōgārnavaya, PartI, p.2.; Prayōgaratnāvaliya, p.2.

This statement is found in both works of Mayūrapāda and it suggests his wish to remain faithful to the ancient Indian medical tradition.

Sanskrit medical treatises were translated and studied by the Sinhalese either from the originals, or translations made at a later period into Tamil. For example, works such as the Yōgasataka sanne and the Rasasamhitā sanne are direct translations of Sanskrit medical treatises. On the other hand, the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava which deals exhaustively with the treatment of various forms of diseases and their treatment appears to be based on a Tamil version of a Sanskrit medical work. In reference to this work Godakumbura makes the following observation: 'That the Tamil version of the Vaidyacintāmanī is itself derived from a Sanskrit original is evident from the large number of Sanskrit stanzas appearing in the Sinhalese book. It is to be assumed that the Tamil version also had these Sanskrit portions'.[1]

The nomenclature of diseases found in the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava reminds us of the lists of names of diseases given in the standard Sanskrit medical works. Terms such as jvara(fever),[2] slīpada(elephantiasis),[3] Masūrikā

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1. C.E.Godakumbura, Sinhalese Literature, p.336.
2. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava, p.2.
3. Ibid.p.171.

(small-pox)[1], apasmāra(epilepsy)[2] and bhagandara(fistula)[3] speak for themselves. Further, Sanskrit influence is clearly seen in the methods of treatment enumerated in the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava.

In the writings of Indian authors of medicine we come across five important methods of treatment collectively called pañca karman. They are vomitives(vamana)[4], purgatives (virēcana)[5], enemeta(vasti)[6], oily enemeta(sneha)[7], and nasal therapy(nāsya)[8]. The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava not only recommends these curing methods, but also has retained their names almost in the same form: vamana Kirīma, virēcana kirīma, vasti kirīma, telen vasti kirīma and nasya kirīma[9].

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava, p.260.
2. Ibid.p.271.
3. Ibid.p.289
4. See Suśruta samhitā, Ed. and translated by Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhishagratna, Vol.II, p.564.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.p.590.
7. Ibid.p.610
8. Ibid.p.659.
9. Vaidya cintamani bhaisadyasangrahava, p.529.

Similarly, the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadyasangrahava deals with such subjects as the theory of the three humours,[1] favourable and unfavourable prognosis in diseases,[2] and different ways of blood-letting.[3] These discussions agree with the contents of well known Sanskrit medical works.

There is no doubt that many of the above mentioned medical works were used by the Sinhalese physicians in Kandyan times. It is also seen that during this period some of the earlier medical works were put into Sinhalese verse to facilitate their study. For example, the Yōgaratnākaraya[4] is a versification of Mayūrapada's Yōgārnavaya. And Midellava Kōrāla's Arisṭa sataka kavi pota[5] and Yōgamālāva[6] are the versified translations of the Arisṭa sataka and the Yōgasaṭaka. In the early eighteenth century Valivita Saranankara translated the Bhēsajjamañjūsā into Sinhalese,[7] thus

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1. Vaidya cintamani bhaisadyasangrahava, p.515.; cf. Suśruta samhita, Vol.I, pp.194 ff.
2. Ibid. pp.510-513.; cf. Suśruta samhitā, Vol.I, pp.270 ff.
3. Ibid. pp.550-560.; cf. Suśruta samhitā, Vol.I, pp.98-119.
4. Ed. K.A. Perera.
5. Or.6612(46).
6. Or.6612(103).
7. Sangharāja sādhucariyāva, p.10.

making it accessible to physicians who did not possess a knowledge of Pāli.

Apart from these there are a large number of lesser works which go on the same path. Among them are Vaidyālankāra sangrahava[1], Rōga pariksāva[2], Yōgadāranaya[3], Garbha cikitsāva[4], Kusṭa cikitsāva[5] and Visha vidhiya[6]. The authors of these works have drawn their material either from the Sanskrit medical works or from their Sinhalese versions.

Considering the foregoing facts, we may conclude that it was the Indian tradition of medicine that has persisted in Ceylon down to the Kandyan times.

Although the Sinhalese recognized that most diseases were due to natural causes and were amenable to ordinary remedies, some diseases were believed to be the infliction of some offended or mischievous supernatural being. Thus, according to the Kalu kumaruṭa kiyana kavi

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1. Or.6612(82)
2. Or.6612(94)
3. Ed.A.Cooray.
4. Or.6612(50)
5. Or.6612(51)
6. Or.6612(77)

and the Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, there were eighteen demons associated with eighteen major diseases, collectively called daha aṭa sanniya. They were Jala sanni yakā, the Demon of Jala sanniya or cholera, Sem sanni yakā, the Demon of Sem sanniya or diseases caused by phlegm, Vāta sanni yakā the Demon of Vāta sanniya or diseases caused by the wind, Pit sanni yakā, the Demon of Pit sanniya or diseases caused by bile, Dēva sanni yakā, the Demon of Dēva sanniya or infectious diseases, Vâdi sanni yakā, the Demon of Vâdi sanniya or wounds and ulcers, Bhūta sanni yakā, the Demon of Bhūta sanniya or madness, Demala sanni yakā, the Demon of Demala sanniya or itch and other skin diseases, Ginijala sanni yakā, the Demon of Ginijala sanniya or shivering, Amuku sanni yakā, the Demon of Amuku sanniya or fits of vomiting and fever, Murtu sanni yakā, the Demon of Murtu sanniya or fainting and swoons, Arda sanni yakā, the Demon of Arda sanniya or headache and giddiness, Gulma sanni yakā, the Demon of Gulma sanniya or stomach ailments, Kana sanni yakā, the Demon of Kana sanniya or blindness, Kora sanni yakā, the Demon of Kora sanniya or lameness, Bīri sanni yakā, the Demon of Bīri sanniya or deafness, Golu sanni yakā, the Demon of Golu sanniya or dumbness and Maru sanni yakā, the Demon of

Maru sanniya or incurable diseases and death.[1] It is surprising that 'death' finds a place in this list of diseases. The term maru sanniya probably denotes that class of diseases which could speedily assume an incurable character and have a fatal termination, for death was often personified in the term maraṇaya nam rakusā, the demon of Death; while the act of dying was often termed maru muvaṭa pat venavā, falling into the mouth of Death. However since there are many diseases which could tend to be fatal, one cannot be definite as to which particular disease is meant here. This shows that this description of diseases is by no means precise.

Further, symptoms have sometimes been classed as distinct diseases. For example, shivering, vomiting and fever, and headache and giddiness have been considered distinct diseases, although they are merely symptoms which accompany different diseases. The same could be said of many other 'diseases' which find a place in this interesting but mainly fanciful account. Commenting on this method of classifying diseases sometimes adopted by the Sinhalese Davy

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1. Kaḷu kumaruṭa kiyana kavi, vv.31-43.; Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, vv.491-544. The Rōga parīksāva, Or.6612(94), Fol.8-11; the Guṇa paṭaya nam veda pota, Or.6612(48), Fol.3-5., the Rōga parīksana hā behet pota, Or.6612(32), Fol.7-10.; and the Daha aṭa pelapāliya saha sanni samayama, pp.9-16 also give us similar accounts.

observes: '...diseases are not considered as combinations of symptoms; on the contrary, almost each symptom and each modification of a symptom, is considered a distinct disease'.[1]

When an illness was suspected to be due to the malignant influence of a demon, the services of an exorcist styled yakädurā[2] were obtained to propitiate him with suitable sacrifices and offerings. The yakädurā studied the sumptoms of the illness and found out by sight the cause of the affliction before he undertook the task of propitiating the demon believed to have caused it. For instance the yakädurā studied the symptoms of the disease caused by the Demon of Vāta sanniya in the following manner:

> sītala ata paya sandi ridennē
> vāta ängē vädiyen bäsa yannē
> äta visālā nuvarin ennē
> vāta sanni puda illā ennē
> The limbs are cold and there is pain in the joints. Wind passes from the body frequently. This is a case of (the Demon) Vāta sanni coming from the distant city of Visālā demanding a sacrifice.[3]

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p.249.
2. The priest of the demon ceremonies was sometimes addressed in a more respectful manner as gurunnansē or kattandirāla; See Kalu kumaruṭa kiyana kavi, v.46.
3. Purāṇa sinhala tovil kavi, v.518.

Having thus found out the name of the offended demon, the yakädurā proceeded to perform a ceremony called tovilaya, to propitiate him with appropriate sacrifices and offerings. The quickest way to appease an offended demon was thought to be to feed him with human blood and flesh, nara rīri mas. However, since this was not practicable, the exorcists used all their wits to compel the demons to accept a substitute, usually the flesh of a cock, sometimes even addressing them in an indignant and abusive form with such words as the following:

dun bili veta dän bälma helannē
minī masaṭa giju kam nositannē
sanni yakā tō ǎi noma dannē
menna yakuni kukulā dähä gannē

Now look at the sacrifices we have offered. Do not be greedy. Do not demand human flesh.(After all) you are only a sanni yakā. Why don't you realise that? Demon! Here is a cock. Accept it.[1]

sanni yakā tō leḍa karavannē
dunnu pidēniya risi läba gannē
siragei dumgei damami bolannē
anjana behetut tavaḍā devannē

You are a sanni yaka who cause diseases. You should accept the sacrifices (we have) offered. (If not) you'll be put in the prison or the 'smoke-house' and made to eat the anjana medicine.[2]

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1. Kaḷu kumaruṭa kiyana kavi, v.47.
2. Purāna sinhala tovil kavi, v.467.

yakunē kukulā bili äraganne
āturā piripota numba äräpannē
sata häma rō duk duru karavannē
yakunē kukulā bili äraganne

Demon! Accept this cock as a sacrifice. Take back the disease you have given him. (In fact) you should free all beings from the diseases (you have caused). Demon! Accept this cock as a sacrifice.[1]

Several writers refer to this practice of offering a cock to the demon on behalf of the sick: 'Besides other offerings, it is usual for a Ceylonese, when he is apprehensive of danger from his illness, to devote a cock to the devil or evil spirit who, he imagines, torments him'.[2] 'The belief in the power of these evil spirits, making them propitiatory offerings, and sacrificing a red cock for the purpose of averting and repelling threatened misfortunes, are very general'.[3] 'Especially in cases of sickness and danger, the assistance of the devil-dancer is implicitly relied on: an altar, decorated with garlands, is erected within sight of the patient, and on this an animal, frequently a cock, is to be sacrificed for his recovery'.[4]

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1. Kukulu upata, Or.6615(427), Fol.4, v.VI.
2. Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p.223
3. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, p.541.
4. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol.I, p.541.

Besides the eighteen sanni yakas mentioned above, there were other demons who were supposed to cause afflictions, and who could be tricked into inactivity by the exorcist. Among them were Kaḷukumāra yakā, Rīri yakā, Hūniyan yakā, Daḷa Kaḍavara yakā, Maha sohon yakā, and Garā yakā.

There are several works which contain incantations addressed to these demons. For example, the Kaḷu kumāra kavi[1] is a ballad intended to be recited at ceremonies held to propitiate the Demon Kaḷukumāra. In the Rīri yakāge kavi[2], the Demon Rīri yakā is invoked to avert sickness. The Hūniyan yak kavi[3] gives a ritual to heal sickness by making an offering to the demon Hūniyan yakā. The Daḷa kaḍavara doḷa kavi[4] is intended as an incantation to the demon Daḷa kaḍavara. The Maha sohon pidavila[5] contains verses for recitation in sacrifices to the demon Maha sohon yakā. The Yakungē bili dīma[6] invokes the influence of the demon

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1. Or.6615(243).
2. Or.6615(492).
3. Or.6615(62).
4. Or.6615(71).
5. Or.6615(316).
6. Or.6615(509).

Garā yakā. The Tovil pāli upata[1] and the Yakun elavīma kavi[2] also contain verses for recitation at ceremonies held to propitiate these demons.

At the end of the propitiatory ceremony the patient was sometimes made to wear a talisman, yantraya, as a further safeguard against the attacks of the above mentioned demons.[3]
This was a magical diagram or a set of letters drawn on a strip of palm leaf or a copper plate. After putting it under a spell by the repetition of a particular incantation, it was rolled up and enclosed in a metal cylinder and tied round the patient's neck or the loin by means of a thread coloured with turmeric. In reference to these

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1. Or.6615(462)

2. Or.6615(332)

3. Parker thus refers to one of these yantrayas worn against bad dreams: 'We notice a little copper tube slung on the right upper arm of our host's wife, by means of a yellow thread which passes through two rings on its under side. In reply to our carefully worded inquiry regarding it, he informs us that as she had been troubled with evil dreams they had thought it advisable to get a friend of his, a Vedarala or doctor, who was acquainted with astrological and magical lore, to supply her with a magical diagram and spell against dreams, inscribed on a strip of dried palm leaf, which was rolled up and placed in the tube. The thread, a triple one, was coloured with saffron, and nine knots were made on it before it was tied on her arm, a magical spell being repeated as each knot was made'. H.Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol.I,p.15.

talismans Wirz states: 'Yantra are mystic diagrams and geometrical designs on which certain letters or syllabic characters are written. They are drawn or engraved on strips of palm-leaf or copper or gold foil and have the significance of amulets. They are worn in a little metal case round the neck or upper arm or even the loins, as a protection against any possible danger or harm'.[1]

Some of the Sinhalese works which treat of the legends and cults of various demons also prescribe yantras against them and give detailed accounts of the method of drawing these esoteric diagrams. For example the Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, prescribing a yantra against the attacks of Kaḷukumāra, says that it should be written on a copper plate, tamba patraya, and put under a spell by one hundred and eight repetitions of the following incantation(mantraya).

> ōn namō aṭa maha narakaya ätti trivida ratnē ätti vesamuni raju ätti mē kaṇḍaṭa disti lāmaṭa kaḷukumarun min maṭu nāti sahatikai sattai ēsvaha.
>
> Ōn namō. There are the eight great hells. There is the Triple Gem. There is king Vesamuni. (But) there is no black demon to torment this being hereafter. That is certain. That is definite, ēsvaha.[2]

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1. Paul Wirz, Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon, p.206

2. Kaḷukumaruṭa kiyana kavi, p.23. The Yantra kaksaya, Or.6615(18) and the Yantra pota, Or.6612(21) also give accounts of the method of inscribing spells and diagrams on palm leaves and copper plates.

Sometimes an incantation, mantraya, was inscribed on a palm leaf or a copper plate without any diagrams. And this was to be worn by the patient as a talisman. The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava gives such an incantation with the following instructions, against the attacks of demons who cause infectious diseases.

> mē mantraya liyā kaha sandun devagen kalu mūda ēksiya ata vara maturā yantra sē akulā dakunu atē bandinu.
>
> This mantraya should be written (on a strip of palm leaf or a copper plate). It should (then) be coloured with turmeric and sandal wood paste and put under a spell by one hundred and eight repetitions of the (same) mantraya. (Next) it should be rolled up like a yantraya and tied round the right arm.[1]

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.269.; Most of the incantations inscribed on yantrayas and recited at ceremonies held to propitiate demons were addressed to the particular demon concerned. However, it is noteworthy that there was also a class of incantations which were based on the virtues of the Buddha. Some of them are, Mahāpurusa lakunu vina kāpun kavi, Or.6615(370), Set sati sirasa pādaya, Or.6615(479), Suriya mangalē, Or.6615(30), Set ruvan mālaya, Or.6615(428), Buddha ratna vidhiya, Or.6615(345), and Jvara vidhiya, Or.6615(199). These refer to the Buddha's virtuous qualities, the auspicious signs found on his body and some of the important events from his life. Writing concerning the magical ceremonies performed for the propitiation of demons Selkirk states that the exorcist 'repeated his incantations in which the name of Buddha came over frequently'.; James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p.380.

A Sinhalese folk-tale thus refers to one of these talismans worn to ward off the attacks of demons: 'After that, having bathed the man, and having uttered spells, after the Vedarāla had tied protective written spells and diagrams on him the man became conscious'.[1]

Gods were another class of supernatural beings believed to cause diseases. Ordinarily, however, gods were supposed to protect the people from the malevolence of demons and other misfortunes.

sit lesa yaku binda harina vilāsaya
set den vibisana arinu me dōsaya

O God Vibhisana! You beat demons and drive them away with ease. May you remove this illness in the same way and grant me your blessings.

balāti yakun dutu tāna bāta deti tada
tedāti devol devi seta den lāba puda

O mighty God Devol! When ever you see (even) a powerful demon, you beat him thoroughly. May you accept these sacrifices and grant me your blessings.

dī bāṭa tada yaku elavā dasa ata
mē puda lāba vāsala devi den seta

O God Vāsala! You beat the demons hard and make them run in various directions. May you accept

1. H.Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol.II.,p.121.

May you accept these sacrifices and grant me your blessings![1]

'All blessings and good success they say, come from the hand of god, but sickness and diseases proceed from the Devil', states Knox.[2] In this connexion Percival observes: 'Every disease or trouble that assails them is produced by the immediate agency of the demons sent to punish them: while, on the other hand, every blessing or success comes directly from the hands of the beneficient and supreme God'.[3] Several gods like Saman Deviyo and Nāta Deviyo were thought to be specially beneficient to mankind.[4] It was commonly believed, however, that certain epidemics and illnesses, such as small-pox, were caused by the grave provocations of the gods. Hence this class of diseases was usually called deiyanne leda, gods' diseases.

lova rakinda deviyan sāma tāna innē
esev ayat uranava deti leda unnē
hatara varam deviyot ivatata yannē
napurukam nisai mē hāma minisunnē

1. Mal yahan kavi pota, Ed.M.P.Karunatillaka, vv.8,15,17. See also Satara varan mal yahan kavi, Or.6615(386), Fol.1-8.; Purāna sinhala tovil kavi, pp.1-28.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.117.
3. Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p.211.
4. See Purāna sinhala tovil kavi, pp.1-2.

> There are gods everywhere, ready to protect the world. But when angry, they themselves send disease (upon mankind). Even the four Guardian Gods go elsewhere. These things happen because of the cruel deeds of the people.[1]

Being a disease which used to take a heavy toll of the people, small-pox was often called maha ledē, the great disease. And goddess Pattini was believed to preside over it: 'They think it is a disease inflicted upon them by a goddess called Pattini Dewiyo, whenever they speak of it, they do so in a whisper, and they look about all the time as if in expectation of some evil coming upon them. When any one dies of small pox, instead of the loud lamentations which are customary on the death of a person under circumstances, there is not a sound heard; none of the usual formalities of funerals are observed, and the corpse is taken from the house to the burial-ground at dead of night'.[2]

Knox too states that those who die of smallpox were buried without any ceremony: '...if any dye of the small Pox, be his Degree what it will, he must be Buried upon Thorns,

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1. Sivupadamālē, p.19.

2. James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p.504. Davy narrates how he saw some 'trunks of trees deprived of their branches, fixed in the ground inverted. On enquiring the meaning of this unusual appearance', he was 'informed that they were thus planted, at a time that small-pox raged, to appease the goddess Patine (sic), by whom in her wrath the disease was supposed to be sent'. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p.412.

without any further Ceremony'.[1]

As has been said, smallpox was believed to be caused by goddess Pattini for some offence of omission or commission on the part of the patient; hence to grieve or mourn over his death or to bury him with the usual rites may have been considered offensive to her.

There were number of other gods in the Sinhalese pantheon who were considered to be on the whole benevolent. However, when offended they too were believed to inflict injury upon mankind in the form of sickness and other calamities. Prominent among these gods were Upulvan Deviyo, Vishnu Deviyo, Vibhisana Deviyo, Kataragama Deviyo, Dādimunda Deviyo, Pitiyē Deviyo, Devol Deviyo, Mangara Deviyo and Vīramunda Deviyo.[2]

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.187. Percival has made a similar observation in this connexion: 'The disease which particularly excites their apprehension is the small-pox. It is looked upon as the immediate instrument of Gods' vengence...If any one dies of it, he is looked upon as accursed, and even his body is denied the rites of burial. It is carried out to some unfrequented place, and there left with a few bushes or branches of trees thrown over it'. Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p.201.

2. Upulvan asnē kavi, Or.6611(265), Vishnu vidhiya kavi, Or.6615(323), Amara sāntiya, Or.6611(263), Kanda kumāra sahalla, Or.6615(31), Dādimunda deviyanta kiyapu kavi, Or.6615(324), Pitiyē deviyange kavi, Or.6615(239), Devol deviyange katāva, Ed.P.E.P.Deraniyagala, Mangara deviyange kavi, Or.6615(19), and Viramunda alankāraya, Or.6615(235) deal with the legends and cults of these gods.

It is noteworthy that gods were generally imagined as having a special locality of their own. Within this fixed local habitation each god was much honoured and feared by his votaries. Knox observes: 'These Spirits or Gods are local. For those which they worship in one Country or part of the Land, are not known or owned to have power over the People in other parts'.[1] Heydt agrees with Knox when he states: 'They consider also, that their gods have only certain districts or Corlas over which to rule, that in this region one does his work but in other regions has no power and therefore is neither honoured nor feared there'.[2] Forbes states that Vibhisana, who was considered a powerful god at Kälaniya and in the vicinity of Colombo, was 'never heard of' in Kandy.[3] The following verses from the Dēva anuhasa refer to the permanent abodes of some of the important gods in the Sinhalese pantheon.

dēvapura siṭa tēja pānē upulvan ē dev rajui
kelaniyē adipativa siṭinē vibīsana maha dev rajui
saparagamuvē niväsi somi guna darana esaman dev rajui
patala tedabala kataragama väsi kanda nam ē dev rajui

At Dēvapura (Devi nuvara) resides God Upulvan. Kälaniya is the abode of God Vibhisana. The pious

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.123.
2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p.139.
3. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, p.318.

> God Saman resides at Saparagamuva, while that famous and powerful God Kanda (Skanda) resides at Kataragama.[1]

Hence when an illness was believed to be due to the visitation of a local god, generally vows of sacrifice were made to that particular god to secure his forbearance. For this purpose it was vitally important to find out which particular god was responsible for the illness. 'When ill-luck or sickness attacks them', Heydt writes, 'they are chiefly attentive to find out, from which god or devil this comes to them, or which is the cause of it'.[2] In this connexion Knox observes: '...one of their great and frequent businesses with their Gods is for the Recovery of health. And that God or Devil that hath made them sick, in his power only it is to restore them. Therefore when they feel themselves sick or sore, first, they use means to know which God or Devil hath been the cause or author thereof'.[3] Now the question arises as to who diagnosed the cause of the illness and prescribed a remedy for it. Attention may here be called to the fact that there was a class of priests who were believed to be capable of divining and interpreting the will of the gods. Such a priest was

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1. Dēva anuhasa, p.6.; See also Saṭara varan mal yahan kavi, Or.6615(386), Fol.5-6.
2. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p.139.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.121.

usually called kapurāla or kapuvā. The kapurāla was distinct from yakädurā or the priest of the demon ceremonies whom we have mentioned earlier.[1] The work of the kapurāla was entirely concerned with the ceremonies connected with the gods: 'The second order of Priests are those called Koppuhs. Who are the Priests that belong to the Temples of the other Gods. Their Temples are called Dewals'.[2] 'The Capuas, who perform ceremonies in honour of these strange gods, are of a higher rank than the Kattadias, who conduct the incantations to the Yakkas, and they are more or less connected with the Dewales and temples of Hinduism'.[3] In all cases of sickness which were believed to be due to the provocation of a god, one of these priests was employed to identify the actual god concerned. In fact, one of the chief functions of the kapurāla was that of diagnosis. At the divination ceremony he was supposed to get possessed by the particular god who was responsible for the disease. Further, it was believed that the god spoke directly through the mouth of the kapurāla who fell into a trance on such occasions: 'When the people are minded to enquire any thing of their Gods, the Priests take up some of the Arms and Instruments of the Gods, that are in the Temples, upon his shoulder;

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1. See supra, p.283.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp.119,120.
3. James Emerson Tennent, Ceylon, Vol.I, pp.541,542.

and then he either fains himself to be mad, or really is so: which the people call Pissowetitch; and then the spirit of the God is in him, and whatsoever he pronounceth, is looked upon as spoken by God himself, and the people will speak to him, as if it were the very person of God'.[1]

Selkirk too gives us an interesting account of the proceedings of a divination ceremony held by a kapurāla:

'...then in a few minutes he begins to stagger and run about the place as if mad, and when he comes out again he is seized by two persons, who say to him, "We pray the gods to declare through this man what is the cause of this person's sickness, and by what means it may be cured". When thus asked the priest says that such and such devils have occasioned the illness, and that it may be cured by such and such offerings and ceremonials. They then turn their thoughts towards the performance of another ceremony'.[2]

The kapurāla who passed into a state of trance at the divination ceremony remained so for some time, making responses to the words which the god was supposed to speak, while his own voice was perhaps interpreted as the voice of god. At the end of the ceremony, the celebrant revealed the name

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.121.
2. James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p.237.

of the offended god and the prescription for propitiating him. The following verse from the Dēva anuhasa, gives us an idea of the manner in which the kapurāla usually revealed the name of the offended god to the patient:

vīramuṇḍa devi kipī tibennē
näṛa rōga inmaya äṭi vahnē
pas lō pahanak puda dīpannē
siyaḷu dōsa inmaya näṭi vannē

God Viramuṇḍa is angry (with you). The illness is due to that. A lamp made of the five kinds of metal should be offered to him. That alone will end all (your) misfortunes.[1]

Since it was generally believed that the kapurāla was capable of interpreting the will of the gods, the people had implicit faith in the accuracy of his diagnosis and the efficacy of his advice.

Having thus discovered the offended god concerned, the sick person's relatives usually made a vow of sacrifice to him to secure his forbearance. This practice has been described by Heydt as follows: 'At times that they are sick, they go to their gods with an offering to give to them, and pray for their mercy and help, that they get their health again, promise him also that they will on recovery

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1. Dēva anuhasa, v.17.

give to his Majesty (so they title their gods) far greater gifts and yet more thanks; and bargain or promise as they will, perhaps to give a piece of land, or slaves, cattle, money, clothing or the like'.[1] Attention may also be drawn here to the following verse from the Dēva anuhasa:

hisa piṭa gal kulak tabuvā lesa dänenā
kanda piṭa pāra siyayak tälu lesa ridenā
deviyani merō duralanu pā devi karuṇā
pudanemi memā kalasak manā ridiyenā

My head is heavy, as if a large rock is placed on it. My body aches as if a hundred lashes were given on my back. O God, if you free me from this illness, I will reward you with a vessel made of pure silver.[2]

Vows thus made had to be fulfilled after the desired boon was granted. If the sick person's prayers did not produce the expected results he proceeded to pray in a more indignant form, often telling the indifferent god how much wasted sacrifices and unanswered prayers have cost him.

vändemi vändili nalalē gedi nägena turu
dunnemi devili tibu dē näti venā turu
kivvemi kivili kaṭa dekonin irena turu
dänvat net helanu deviyani itā garu

I worshipped (you) till blisters appeared on my forehead. I made offerings (to you) till I

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p.134.
2. Dēva anuhasa, p.13.

> finished everything I had. I prayed (you) till my mouth tore itself from its sides. O God, I request you to turn your eyes towards me at least now.[1]

If the god was found to be very obstinate, the invocation was made by the kapurāla himself, for he was supposed to be capable of communicating with the unseen empire of the gods directly.[2] Different means of persuasion were employed by him to induce the malignant god to leave his tormented victim. If these too failed, the kapurāla sometimes threatened and even abused the god whom he was once begging for forgiveness. In this connexion Knox observes: 'If after this, he fails on his part, and cannot restore them to their health, then the fore-promised things are to remain where they were: and instead of which perhaps he gets a Curse, saying, He doth but cheat and deceive them...Nay, I have often heard them say, Give him no Sacrifice, but shit in his Mouth, what a God is He?'[3] Presumably at this stage the patient's relatives sought further divination, or entrusted the task of propitiating the god believed to have caused the disease to some other kapurāla.

Along with the above mentioned gods were also invoked the presiding deities of the planets, grahayō.

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1. Dēva anhhasa, p.14.
2. See Kāpun tirasa pādaya saha māṇikpāla sāntiya, pp.7, 8.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.122.

'There are nine Deities, which they call Gerehah, which are the Planets (reckoning in probably the Dragon's Head and Tail.) From whom proceed their Fortunes'.[1] The following verse gives the list of nine planets:

irut sikuru kuja rāhu da senasuru
sandut budahu guru kehetu da graha garu
isat sitama depayata ati uvaduru
harit ivata min pasu nā uvaduru

May the noble planets, Iru, Sikuru, Kuja, Rāhu, Senasuru, Sandu, Buda, Guru, and Kehetu, remove all illnesses (afflicting the different parts of the body) from head to foot; and may you see to it that no misfortune befall us hereafter.[2]

However the nine planets in regular order are as follows: Iru or Ravi(Sun); Sandhu or Chandra(Moon); Kuja or Angahara(Mars); Buda(Mercury); Guru or Brhaspati(Jupiter); Sikuru or Sukra(Venus); Senasuru or Sani(Saturn); Rahu (ascending node); Kētu(descending node).

Sinhalese astronomy shows a striking resemblance to Hindu astronomy and it is reasonable to suggest that the idea of the nine planets was based upon the nava graha theory of the Hindus. In this connexion we may draw attention to the following observation made by Vogel in

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.122.
2. Kavtuka sangrahaya, Vol.III, p.30, v.2.

reference to the term graha as used by the Indians: 'The term graha was used by the Indians,...not only for the planets proper (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), but also for the sun and moon. It denotes, in other words, all celestial bodies seeming to have a motion of their own among the fixed stars; the sun answers this description in so far as it moves between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and travels through the zodiac from west to east. Occasionally, the ascending and descending nodes of the moon...were reckoned amongst the planets as well, whence graha may symbolize the number "nine" '.[1] It appears that in Ceylon too the idea of the nine planets was based upon the same theory.

If an illness was found to be due to a planetary deity, a ceremony called baliya was performed to appease him: 'Planets, by the Cingalese, are believed to be controlling spirits, for whom certain ceremonies and incantations are prescribed to be performed by those who at certain periods are supposed to be subjected to their malignant influence: these ceremonies are called Bali'.[2]

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1. Vāgbhata's Astāngahrdaya samhitā, ed. and tr. by Claus Vogel, p.71.

2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, pp.322, 323.; There are a number of poems composed for recitation by exorcists at bali ceremonies. Among them are Balisārasuma, Or.6615(454), Balipiḷivela, Or.6615(175), Māṭi bali yāgaya, Or.6615(95), Mal bali upata, Or.6615(333), Nava graha sivu santiya, Or.6615(497) Bali vidhiya, Or.6615(37) and Bali nidhānaya, Or.6615(132).

It was the village astrologer who, with his calculations, found out the name of the offended planetary deity. His predictions were usually based on the position of the planet under which the patient was born. Knox observes: 'These Astronomers, or rather Astrologers, are skilful in the Knowledge of the Stars, and Planets, of which they reckon nine: 'tis supposed they may add the Dragon's Head and Tail. By which they pretend to foretel all things concerning the health and recovery of Sick Person;...When a Person is Sick, he carries to these men his Nativity, which they call Hanna hom pot, upon the perusal of which they tell his destiny'.[1] Forbes too makes a similar observation: 'Balia is an image of clay, made and worshipped by a person suffering under sickness or misfortune: it is supposed to represent the controlling planet under which such person was born; and for this purpose...his handahana, an astrological document with which every Kandyan is provided, and which contains his horoscope, is submitted to the inspection of an astrologer, who directs the necessary ceremonies'.[2] There are numbers of Sinhalese astrological works which treat of the effects of planets on horoscopes. They discuss in detail the

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.177.
2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, p.323.

different planetary positions which could be hostile to the different parts of the body.

atē sitiya kētuda vimasannē
ata pita kalu lapayak äta unnē
badē ledat tora nätuvama unnē
yaksa vikāraya leḍaya kiyannē

When Ketu is in the eighth, there should appear a black spot on one of his hands. Further, he will be subjected to stomach ailments and diseases caused by demons.[1]

bānuge dasāvenā
pīnasa leḍa äta boru novenā
dāyaka giniyaminā
lat täna dasāva mē lesinā

By the ascendency of the planet bānu(Iru), he would definitely be subjected to nasal diseases such as catarrh. He is also prone to the 'burning diseases'.[2]

Planetary deities were sometimes held to be even more powerful than the ordinary gods. Hence the saying, grahayō naraka nam monavā karannada, if the planetary deities are bad what can be done? In reference to the

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1. Graha valalla, Or.6613(26), Fol.7, v.VI

2. Lagna pala kavi, Or.6613(48), Fol.4, v.III. Among the other works which discuss the effects of the ascendency of each of the nine planets are Nava patala, Or.6613(23), Indra guruluva, Or.6613(21), and Bhāva phalaya, Or.6613(18).

planetary deities Knox too observes: 'These they reckon so powerful, that if they be ill affected towards any party, neither God nor Devil can revoke it'.[1] Therefore it is not surprising that the ceremonies performed in connexion with the planetary deities were usually much more elaborate than most of the other Sinhalese occult ceremonies. Besides the demons, gods and the planetary deities, the Sinhalese believed in the presence of another class of supernatural beings called prētayo, who were at times moved to send disease upon mankind.[2] Prētayo were the spirits of some of the dead.[3] Hence they were believed to be mainly concerned with the members of their own families. Prētayo were thought to be usually harmless. But when ignored by the neglectful descendants they make their desires known by sending disease to them. The Malaprēta kannalavva gives us an interesting account of the prētayo in the Prēta World, who are disposed to send disease upon their unduteous descendants.[4] In order to avoid this danger, Sinhalese

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.122.

2. See Mala prēta yādinna, pp.8-13.

3. Presumably Knox means this class of supernatural beings when he makes the following observation: 'There are Devils also, who are the Inflictors of Sickness and Misery upon them. And these they hold to be the Souls of evil men'. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.115.

4. See infra, pp.344,345.

performed sacrifices in honour of the spirits of the departed relatives. In reference to this Herport observes: 'They honour also the Heads of their nearest relatives that are dead'.[1] It is seen that the spirits of the departed were less feared than the demons or gods.[2] And even a small offering, such as a small basket full of eatables, prēta goṭuva, was thought to be sufficient to make them harmless. The following verse sung by the exorcists at the ceremonies performed for the propitiation of the spirits of the departed refers to such an offering.

prēta lovin āpu topaṭa goṭuva pudanavā
levala kanna päni lē kāṭi pirila tiyanavā
varada ätot movun atē samāva ḍenavā
min pasu kisidāka metopa leḍa nokaranavā

To you all who have come from the Prēta World, we offer this goṭuva(basket), full of honey and blood for you to lick. Forgive these people if they have made any mistakes. Hereafter do

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1. Albrecht Herport, Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol.I.,p.30

2. '...the prēteo (singular=prēta) are the ghosts of the deceased, i.e. the spirits of the dead(manes). Their role is less important than that of the yakku, although they are often mentioned in the same breath. In certain cases they may be dangerous to men, but on the whole, they are easier to deal with than the yakku'. Paul Wirz, Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon, p.7.

not make them ill.[1]

The foregoing facts may create the impression that the Sinhalese attributed all diseases to supernatural beings. In actual practice, however, they recognized many diseases as being due to natural causes. We may say that diseases which could not be rightly diagnosed, and the diseases which were not amenable to ordinary remedies, were usually attributed to supernatural causes. The Purāna pannan katura says:

> sata haṭa vālandi rōgaya suva novena kalā
> āta yakāduran gannā taṭuvaṭa toilā
>
> When an illness afflicting a person is found to be incurable, yakāduras (priests of the demon ceremonies) are employed to make offerings and perform tovil ceremonies.[2]

The following observations too suggest that supernatural was invoked to interfere, only when ordinary remedies failed: 'Whenever anyone is ill they apply those medicines which are known to them, for they are great in the knowledge of herbs; if these prove unsuccessful, they take a board, on

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1. Mala prēta kannalavva, v.13; We may also note the following verse from the Kavtuka sangrahaya:

> mala nāyakugē bālma atōtin
> dena bat dola puda disti helāgan
>
> If it is a deceased relative who caused this illness, may he come and accept this rice offering Kavtuka sangrahaya, p.30.

2. Pannan katura, v.46.

the surface of which they fashion out of clay a figure of the invalid in low relief...'[1] 'They sometimes come to us at the commencement of a disease for medicine, but if the patient does not very speedily recover, they have recourse to this ceremony'[2] It is, however, important to stress that in Kandyan times medicine was often used simultaneously with magic. In fact, it is clear that even the physician proper, vedarāla, often practised other arts such as magic and astrology, for in Kandyan times these subjects were intimately associated with medicine. Thus a Sinhalese folk-tale begins as follows: 'In a certain country there is a Vedarāla. The Vedarāla is a person possessing the knowledge of medical practice, a very clever person at telling prognostics(nimiti kīmen)'[3] Davy speaks of the Sinhalese physician as a person who had to direct his energy into different channels: 'Besides an acquaintance with all that has been alluded to, a Singalese, to be an accomplished and scientific physician, should be an astrologer, that he may know what concern the stars have had in producing a disease, what are the best times for exhibiting medicines, and what are the most appropriate

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1. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p.140.
2. James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p.135.
3. H.Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol.II, p.121.

periods for culling simples. He should be a physiognomist, that he may form a judgment of any case he may be called to, as well from the countenance of the messenger, as of the patient himself. He should be an adept in interpreting dreams, that he may anticipate the future relative to the fate of his patient, form a correct prognosis, and avail himself of any hints the gods may be pleased to send through this obscure channel. And, he should be endowed with the faculty of inferring, from the first appearance of the disease, whether it be the result of a temporary cause deranging the humours, or the consequence of some crime comitted in a former state of existence'.[1]

Obviously, if the physician was skilled in the art of divination, magic, and other subjects considered to be associated with medicine, it would have been convenient for the patients who approached him for treatment. The intention of using a certain amount of magical ritual with medicine was to be on the safe side. Hence some of the Sinhales medical works such as the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, which mainly discuss the properties of drugs and their effect on man, also speaks of the advisability of using charms, incantations and offerings in conjunction with medicine.[2]

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p.250.

2. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, pp.486-487.

However, vedarāla was the physician proper, who diagnosed and prescribed remedies for the ordinary diseases. We noticed elsewhere that the yakädurā and the kapurāla attempted to remove the disease from the patient's body through magic ritual. The vedarāla, on the other hand, usually attempted to achieve the same thing through the whole array of the healing powers which many vegetable, animal, and inorganic substances had in store. While the former attributed most cases of sickness to supernatural causes, the latter usually attributed them to natural causes. Evidence is not lacking to establish that the Sinhalese physicians possessed a traditional knowledge of the efficacy of many herbs and plants: 'Ceylon abounds in various medicinal plants, and most of their sick are cured with their own native medicines, as there are, too, some clever doctors amongst them'.[1] 'They are great herbalists and in cases of wounds, tumours, broken arms and legs they effect a cure in a few days with great ease'.[2]

However, it is somewhat difficult to make a distinction between an ordinary curer who relied on his experience and knowledge of a few drugs credited with possessing

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1. Phillipus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.390.

2. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilāo, p.156.

curative possibilities, and a professional practitioner, vedarāla, who had learnt the specialized treatment of various diseases, usually inheriting his knowledge from a long line of specialist ancestors. The Sinhalese have two proverbs which may be here appropriately quoted:

asakkuvaṭa maṭe apput vedarālalu

In an emergency even Mathe Appu is a physician.

liyanna kiyanna bäri namut tambi apput vedarālalu

Although Thambi Appu cannot read and write, yet he is also a physician.[1]

It is certain that most people knew medicines and cures which were effective enough in common ailments that afflicted them, such as coughs, colds, stomach-aches, sores and blisters. There is no doubt that in cases of minor illness as these, they administered the treatment themselves without approaching a professional physician. This must have prompted Knox to say: 'Here are no professed Physitians nor Chyrurgeons, but all in general have some skill that way, and are Physitians and Chyrurgeons to themselves'.[2] Yet another writer, speaking of the acquaintance of the Sinhalese villager with the properties of different plants and herbs, observes: '...the botanical knowledge of the Cingalese is so great as to be a matter

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1. E.B.Denham, Ceylon at the Census of 1911, p.485.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.181.

of surprise in their uncultivated state. The most illiterate peasant can not only tell the names but the qualities of the minutest plant that is to be found within the precincts of the district which he inhabits'.[1]

Since the ordinary man had this knowledge at his disposal, he may have been capable of treating common ailments. But when his own remedies failed, undoubtedly he had to go to the vedarāla for a serious consultation. With his experience and the knowledge of medicines which was very often guarded as a family secret, the vedarāla obviously had a greater skill to diagnose the cause of the trouble and effect a cure, than the amature curer.

According to the Sinhalese medical treatises, the three humours, wind, vātaya, bile, pita, and phlegm, sema, were the basis of the existence of the human body. It was considered that as long as these three humours resided in their proper places and functioned satisfactorily, the different organs of the body too functioned smoothly. But when a person's three humours were 'angry' or deranged, he fell ill. In other words, being ill was usually understood to be the derangement of the three humours, tun dosa.

vā pit sem tun dos ä̇ta minis kaya
metuna nätot näta pävatumak mē kaya
kipunu kalaṭa näta aḍuvakin rōgaya
pihiṭa eviṭa vedakam dat vedunmaya

1. James Cordiner, A Description of Ceylon, Vol.I, p.106.

There are three humours, wind, bile and phlegm in a person's body. Without these, the body cannot exist. (But) when the humours are 'angry' there arise many diseases. Only a physician can help him then.[1]

tunak dos ekatu kavagena kipennē
noyek sanni hāma leda upadavannē

When one's three humours are 'angry', they will cause many sannis and other diseases.[2]

Many of the Sinhalese medical works describe the different causes which bring about the derangement of the balance of three humours. The Yōga mālāva furnishes the following account in this connexion.

mala mūtrā vālakīmen
kusa badagini isilīmen
neta nidi mata vālakīmen
mahat katā kara binumen
tadabala bara isilīmen
āt as otuvan nāgumen
kulu rasa tittaya kāmen
ahita bojun vālandīmen
langana situvili situmen
maituna sēvana kerumen
bayat sōka sīna penun
vāte kipē mekī deyin

1. Atdutu behet pota, v.11.
2. Aristadāvaliya, v.187.

kuḷu rasa ämbul rasa kāmen
unu bat lunu rasa kāmen
krodat dveshaya situmen
gini avvaṭa viyalīmen

tel pisa bat välandū täna
meki ahita kāma visina
pit kipemin rōga upana
däna garu viyatunē ändina

dāval nidi mata vīmaya
diya goḍa mas madura rasaya
piliniya giya bat kāmaya
tala uk dandu välandīmaya

kiri vänjana bat kāmaya
lunu vädi bōjana kāmaya

kamin kamin pän bīmaya
vasanta nam yana kālaya

mekī bojun ḍäka satosin
yamek noḍäna gena kānan
sen vädi karavā satosin

noyek rōga ohuṭa kipun

The causes which bring about the derangement of the vāta(wind)are the following. Suppression of (natural excretions and necessities such as) faeces, urine, hunger and sleep, (physical exertions such as) loud speech, lifting heavy objects and riding on elephants, horses or camels,(excess in) eating pungent and bitter food, unsuited diet, mental excitements, sexual extravagance, anxiety, grief and bad dreams.

> The causes which bring about the derangement of the pita(bile) are the following. (Excess in) eating pungent, sour, hot, or salty food, anger and (excessive) exposure to the sun. Know that, (in addition to the above mentioned causes), the (excess) in eating rice cooked with oil could also cause the derangement of the pita (bile). The causes which bring about the derangement of the sema(phlegm) are the following. Sleep by day,(excess in) eating fish meat or sweet food, eating stale rice,(excess in) eating sesame, sugar cane, curries and rice cooked with milk, or salty food, and drinking water while eating. (Besides) the season vasantaya(spring) also causes the derangement of the sema. If a person eats the above mentioned foods(in excess), his sema(phlegm) will definitely develop in excess and thereby he will become a victim to various diseases.[1]

When a patient visited the physician, the latter proceeded to find out which of the three humours was deranged. The most common method adopted to find out the affected humour appears to have been the pulse-examination, nādi bālīma. Physicians were expected to be skilled at diagnosing the nature of the illness from the pulse. According to the Atdutu behet pota, vāta or wind occupies the abdomen, chiefly below the navel. And if it is deranged, the patient's pulse goes like a leech. Pita or bile occupies

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1. Yōga mālāva, Or.6612(103), Fol.30-31, vv.VIII-XV.

the heart and the upper intestines. And if it is deranged the pulse goes like a crow. Sema or phlegm occupies the chest. When this humour is deranged, the pulse goes like a swan.[1] The Rōga laksaṇa hā behet pota,[2] the Rōga pāriksāva,[3] the Nādi sāstraya,[4] and the Guṇa pātaya nam veda pota,[5] too give us similar accounts of the movements of the pulse. The usual method of examining the pulse was to hold the patient's wrist with the right hand of the physician. The vedarāla also based his diagnosis on such data as the colour of the eyes, urine and the tongue, for these also indicated which of the three humours was deranged. Thus according to the Atdutu behet pota, a person's eyes and tongue turn whitish when phlegm, sema, is deranged. Urine turns whitish when wind, vāta is deranged, while a blackish tongue indicates the derangement of bile, pita.[6]

Having thus discovered the nature of the illness, the vedarāla proceeded to prescribe the necessary treatment. Once diagnosis was made, treatment and cure were simple

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1. Atdutu behet pota, vv.13-15.
2. Rōga laksaṇa hā behet pota, Or.6612(32).
3. Rōga pariksāva, Or.6612(94).
4. Nādi sāstraya, Or.6612(55).
5. Guṇa pātaya nam veda pota, Or.6612(48).
6. Atdutu behet pota, vv.17,18. See also Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, pp.14-15.

matters of routine, for the physician knew remedies for most of the ailments the people were subjected to. Indeed, as Baldaeus says, 'as every country has its own peculiar maladies, so' the Sinhalese had 'their own proper physicians and cures'.[1]

There were several ways of applying medicines. Some of them were taken orally, while others were used externally. Internal medicines were usually administered in the form of decoctions(kasāya), gruels(kaṅda), syrups (paṅiya) pills(guli), powders(kuḍu), or pastes(kalka).

> kasāyada kaṅda kalka kuḍu paṅi gulida yana mē aviyenā
> maditi vedavaru kipunu vā pit semya yana mē tundenā
>
> Decoctions, gruels, pastes, powders, syrups and pills are the chief weapons used by the physician in crushing the three incensed humours, wind, bile and phlegm.[2]

The Yōga mālava thus refers to some of these preparations.

> palamu una duṭuvot
> langanaya karavā gat
> behet kaṅda dīmat
> kasāyen guṇa vēya yahapat

1. Philippus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.390.

2. Aṭḍutu behet pota, v.24.

tava tadava ennē
guli kalka kuḍu dennē
tel dum bandinnē
pilivelin leḍa guṇa karannē

At the beginning of fever give(the patient) suitable gruels or decoctions. If the fever does not go down, give him pills, pastes, powders, oils, or 'smokes'[1](as recommended) and effect a cure.[2]

Morning has been recommended as the best time for administering medicines.[3] Care was especially taken that medicines which acted as purgatives and emetics were not given at any other time.[4]

It is seen that purging, baḍa virēka karanava and vomiting, laya virēka karanava, formed two of the important curing methods used by the Sinhalese physicians: 'Their Medicines they make of the leaves that are in the Woods, and the barks of Trees. With which they purge and vomit themselves, and will do notable Cures upon green wounds, and also upon sore eyes'.[5] The Vaidyālankāra sangrahava states that purgative is advantageous particularly in diseases

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1. Presumably fumigations in the nose or mouth is meant here.
2. Yōga mālāva, Or.6612(103), Fol.3, vv.VI, VII.
3. Atḍuṭu behet pota, V.32.; Ariṣṭa sataka kavi pota, Or.6612 (46), Fol.1, v.IV.
4. Atḍuṭu behet pota, v.33.
5. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.181.

originating in stomach.[1] However, according to the Atdutu behet pota, a wider range of ailments could be cured by this method.

> badē ridumada mala bändīmada kāma aruciya yana ledat
> tavada bada väl guda magē rō ādi kota äti neka ledat
> ängē idimun hisē käkkun vasa kävīmada yana ledat
> me hāma rōgaya näsī yanu äta virēcana nisi lesa kalot
>
> Diseases such as stomachache, constipation, loss of appetite, diseases of the intestines and anus, swelling of the body, headache and poisoning could be cured by the correct use of the purgatives.[2]

The laxative generally used as a household remedy was myrobalan, aralu (Terminalia chebula).[3]

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1. Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.30. See also Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, pp.530, 531. and Prayōga ratnāvali pp.301-304.
2. Atdutu behet pota, v.39.
3. In reference to this tree Knox states: 'The Orula, a Tree as big as an Apple-Tree, bears a Berry somewhat like an Olive, but sharper at each end; its Skin is of a reddish green colour, which covereth an hard stone. They make use of it for Physic in Purges'. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.27. A decoction prepared from this fruit combined with the leaves of the karapinca plant (Murraya koenigii) and garlic has been recommended as a mild and efficient laxative. See Yōga dāranaya, v.228. In Sinhalese medicine, dried fruits of this plant in addition to those of bulu (Terminalia belerica) and nelli (Phyllanthus emblica) entered into the composition of the tipal kasaya, which was a preparation used in several diseases. See Vaidyalankara sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.37.

Physicians sometimes used a more drastic purgative called jāpāla (Croton tiglium). The kernel of this seed was boiled with goraka(Garcinia cambogia), and pepper(Piper nigrum), and a very small dose of it was given in the morning.[1] Concerning this purgative Knox writes: 'There is a strong Purge they make with a berry called Jawpolls, which is a little long greenish berry. Of it self it is rank Poyson. They boyl it with Goraca, and Pepper in water, and drink a little of the water'.[2] Prayōga ratnāvali, Atdutu behet pota and many other Sinhalese medical works mention this treatment.[3] However, being a drastic purgative, only a very small dose of this preparation was given to a patient.[4] And it was never used in childrens' diseases.

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1. Atdutu behet pota, v.42.

2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.182. Knox thus mention of another purgative used by the Sinhalese: 'For purging they make use of a Tree called Dallugauhah. It bears no leaves, nothing but thorns, and is of a soft substance. Being cut there runs out a white thick milk; in which we soak some whole corns of Pepper a whole night. The next day the Pepper is taken out, and washed clean, and then boyled in fair water with a sower fruit they call Goraca, which we shall speak of by and by. This they drink, and it purgeth very well'.pp.181,182.

3. Prayōga ratnāvali, p.302.; Atdutu behet pota, v.42.

4. The Prayōga ratnāvali states that if this purgative acts too strongly, a little juice of the leaves of the weed undupiyali should be given.p.302. The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava recommends the application of the juice of the leaves of the bäbila plant round the patient's navel, in order to stop the action of a purgative.p.467.

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A child suffering from constipation was usually given a dose of castor oil.[1] This medicine also has been often recommended as a suppository for infants.[2] Purgatives were avoided in the case of infants, pregnant women and old or very weak persons.[3] It was also considered improper to use purgative medicines in diseases of the lungs.[4]

Emetics were recommended in the case of supposedly phlegmatic diseases such as asthma, cough, and epilepsy.[5] A common emetic was the root-bark of the kukuru muvan tree (Randia dumetorum). A piece of this root was boiled with a piece of the root of the bäbila plant and fresh leaves of the margosa tree. The Atdutu behet pota states that a dose of this preparation caused the patient to vomit and thus

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Footnote 4 continued from previous page:
Baldaeus too mentions a similar remedy used by the Sinhalese: 'If their purgatives chance to operate somewhat too strongly, a little ground pepper mixed with some water and smeared round the navel arrests their working'. A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.390.

1. Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.37.
2. Atdutu behet pota, v.43.
3. Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.30.
4. Ibid.
5. Prayōga ratnāvali, p.300.

gave him relief from the attack of many phlegmatic diseases.[1] According to the Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, the fruits of the kukuru muvan tree also could be used for the same purpose.[2]

Writing concerning this emetic Frederick Lewis states: 'The fruit is considered to be a useful emetic, its active principle being saponin. The root-bark is, according to Dr. Gunawardhana, administered as an emetic in bowel complaints and enters into various preparations, for diarrhoea, colics, fever and phlegmatic swellings'.[3] Another emetic used in Kandyan times has been thus described by Knox: 'For a Vomit, there is a leaf of a Plant called Warracole in colour like a Cabbage leaf, but smaller; it grows upon a long stalk some three foot high. This leaf as soon as it is broken from the stalk is full of milk, which runs out. In this milk they put a lump of Salt, and let it lye a whole night. The next day they take the Salt out, which is not dissolved, and wash it clean: then boyl a little, Rice and Water together. After tis taken off the fire, they put this salt into it, and drink it'.[4] Sinhalese medical treatises do not mention this prescription in the same form. However, the Atdutu behet pota states that vomiting could be exited

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1. Atdutu behet pota, v.44.
2. Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.3.
3. Frederick Lewis, The Vegetable Products of Ceylon, p.230.
4. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.182.

by administering the root bark of the varā tree(Calotropis gigantea) in the form of decoction with salt and honey.[1] According to Frederick Lewis, the powdered root-bark of this tree could be used as 'an emetic, alterative, and purgative'.[2]

In addition to the practice of cleansing the body by purging and vomiting, the practice of bloodletting also appears to have been common. Bloodletting was often resorted to in ailments such as headaches, swellings, long standing fevers, abscesses and diseases in the mouth, nose and eyes.[3]

A very mild way of letting out superfluous blood was the application of leeches. According to the Prayōga ratnāvali there are six species of poisonous leeches and six species of non-poisonous leeches. The latter were called veda kūdällo or veda puhudāvo, and they alone had to be applied to remove bad blood from a patient.[4] D.A.Darling has made the following observation concerning these leeches as well as this peculiar remedy: 'The water or medicinal leeches of the Island, are very highly esteemed by medical men, as being far preferable to the English leech; they are considerably larger than the English kind (in fact more

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1. Atdutu behet pota,v.46.
2. Frederick Lewis, The Vegetable Products of Ceylon,p.285.
3. See Vaidya cintāmani baisadya sangrahava,pp.551,552.
4. Prayōga ratnāvali,p.314,315.

like huge worms than leeches); the largest and common sizes being five and six inches long, about as thick as the little finger and when filled with blood, about the size of the thumb. These leeches are considered invaluable, in many cases of jungle fever, remittant or intermittant; and also in rheumatics. When I was laid up with rheumatic fever, for the five weeks I told you of, I had fifty-three of these juvenile snakes applied to my knees'.[1] When the leech had drawn enough blood, it was removed and the wound treated in the following manner.

> puhuḍāvan kävū täna äl pänin sodā venivāl gäṭa kasā hā heḷa gitelin hanā vaṇaya vasā galvanu.
>
> The place bitten by the leech should be washed with cold water. Thereafter, a mixture of venivälgäṭa, turmeric and white ghee should be applied to the wound.[2]

Bloodletting was effected not only by application of leeches, but also with sharp instruments. But in the case of children and old or weak persons this form of blood letting was avoided as far as possible.[3]

The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava states that the instruments used for opening the different veins to let out blood, should be sharp and strong.[4] Further, it

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1. J. & D.A.Darling, Extracts of letters from Ceylon, 1848, p.98.
2. Prayōga ratnāvali, p.315.
3. Atdutu behet pota, v.48.
4. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.553.

says that an old and feeble physician should not open veins.[1] This was to avoid the danger of striking the instrument on a dangerous place. After the operation, leaves of the arūda plant crushed with a little resin, were pressed against the wound.[2]

For diseases of head, throat and eye, medicines were sometimes introduced in the patient's nostrils through a reed. This technique was usually called nasnakaranava. Sinhalese medical treatises prescribe a large number of medicines to be taken by the nose in diseases above the neck.[3] For example, in the case of severe headache, the juice of garlic, ginger and sugarcandy were mixed with the juice extracted from the leaves of the betel creeper and the tumba plant, and a little of this preparation was blown into the patient's nose through a reed.[4]

Fumigation in the nose, dum allanava, is prescribed for chest troubles, severe headaches and several other diseases. The Atdutu behet pota recommends the following 'Smoke' - treatment for headache and other diseases

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.553.
2. Ibid.
3. See Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, pp.51, 60, 89.; Prayōga ratnāvali, pp.304-306.; As veda pota, p.10.
4. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.57.

of the head.

abada sudu duru ensāl saha nīda kottan yana dēt kurundu potu hā kahā samagin damā ginnaka honda hätit nägennata van kalata dun goba ledā inda dum ālluvot sākak nāta in näsēmaya hisa rujā saha hisa un ledat

Put some mustard, cummin, cardamom, mī and kottan seeds and some cinnamon and turmeric on a fire. When the fumes start coming up, the patient should inhale them. This will definitely cure his headache and other diseases of the head.[1]

There were a number of other forms of smoke used in other ailments. The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava prescribes several such remedies to be used to bring relief to pregnant women suffering from prolonged labour pain.[2]

It is known that patients were sometimes treated with vapour baths. Medicinal stuffs were boiled up with water, and the patient was made to sweat by lying near the boiling pot. This method was often tried in the case of patients suffering from asthma, cough and such other diseases.[3] The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava recommends the leaves of endaru, varā, (Calotropis gigantea) titinga

1. Atdutu behet pota, v.51.
2. See Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, pp.409, 410, 412. For treatment of women during pregnancy and labour, see supra, pp. 107 ff.
3. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.543.

and totila(Oroxylam indicum) plants for the purpose of steaming such a patient.[1]

Fractures and dislocations were treated by properly setting up the bones and applying medicines over the affected part. Herbs and other substances taken for this purpose were usually beaten in a pulp. Such a preparation was called pattuva. The Vaidyālankāra sangrahava prescribes the following pattuva for a fracture:

> olinda kola kabulussā kola kota dimulā kola kotā malavā bandinu. vahā sandiganī.
>
> Take leaves of the olinda creeper, kabulussā creeper and kota dimbulā plant. Crush them in a mortar. (Then) roast this pulp and bandage (on the fracture).[2]

There were also a large number of ointments, lotions and oils which were massaged into the particular part of the body to promote the joining of the fractured ends and to give relief from the pain.[3] Sometimes the liquid extract of the bark of the nitul (Plumbago rosea) plant was mixed with milk and applied over the affected part to precipitate the healing process.[4]

Further, to make the fractured joint become firm,

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.542.
2. Vaidyālankāra sangrahava, Or.6612(82), Fol.23.
3. See Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.318.
4. Udarata behetgei atveda pota, p.14.

splinters of bamboo were tied round it.[1] These were allowed to remain as they were for a few days; and at the end of this period the bandage was renewed. This process was repeated until the fracture got mended. Besides, if complications such as fever and fainting occured medicines were given internally as well. Usually a decoction consisting of the juice extracted from the fresh leaves of the kobōlīla, miristalā and hīrässa (Vitis quadrangularis) plants and milk was given to persons suffering from fractures and dislocations.[2]

Several writers mention Sinhalese physicians who skilfully treated fractures: 'A Neighbour of mine a Chingulay, would undertake to cure a broken Leg or Arm by application of some Herbs that grow in the Woods, and that with that speed, that the broken Bone after it was set should knit by the time one might boyl a pot of Rice and three carrees, that is about an hour and an half or two hours; and I knew a man who told me he was thus cured'.[3] Forbes gives us the following interesting account of a bone setting operation performed by a Sinhalese bone-setter: 'Between Payanadoe and Tamenawille we had an opportunity of witnessing a curious specimen of native surgery, - the

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.317.
2. Ibid. p.318.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp.31,32.

putting in an ankle joint which had been dislocated: the poor man who had met with the accident seemed to be suffering great pain; when a head-man, who practised the healing art, set to work with peculiar gravity, promising to repair the damaged limb. He first secured the unlucky man's shoulders to one tree, and the foot of the injured limb was made fast to another by a double rope; through this double the head-man passed a short stick, which he afterwards twisted round and round until he had tightened the cord and stretched the limb. In doing this, the practitioner twisted coolly, while the patient bawled lustily; then suddenly the stick was withdrawn, allowing the cord to untwist itself, and the ankle was found to be perfectly reinstated.[1]

A certain amount of surgery was used, principally in treating diseases such as boils, abscesses, and tumours: 'The surgical operations they perform are chiefly of those of cautering and cupping, and opening boils'.[2] 'They are particularly successful in their management of boils and tumours (common afflictions of the Ceylon climate); and,

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, pp.247-248.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p.249. There are a number of medical works on treatment of boils, tumours and similar diseases. Among them are Salla vidhiya, Or.6612(116), Gadu vidhiya, Or.6612(44), and Vidun sāstraya, Or.6612(79).

amongst many different forms of treatment, occasionally make most daring and extensive use of the actual cautery'.[1]

Sinhalese medical treatises refer to a number of instruments used for surgical purposes. According to the Prayōga ratnāvali there were two instruments used for scarification and excision. Five instruments were used in opening boils, abscesses, tumours and the like. Another five instruments were used in blood-letting. There were also five pointed instruments for boring. And two for catching eye lids, half opened skins and the like. There was also an instrument for the examination of fistulas and ulcers.[2]

The Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava mentions only six surgical instruments, namely, a pair of scissors, katura, a pair of tongs, aṅduva, a pointed instrument for boring, vidinā kaṭuva, a probe for the examination of fistulas and wounds, oḍu vaṇa jāti balana yakaḍa kūra, a razor, karakātta and a needle, idikaṭuva.[3]

Surgery has been particularly prescribed in the case of ulcers, fistulas, abscesses, tumours and such other ailments. Even these were first treated with various

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years of Ceylon, Vol.I., p.362.
2. Prayōga ratnavali, pp.315-316.
3. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.553.

decoctions, emetics, purgatives, blood-letting and other techniques. When these remedies failed surgery was resorted to. According to the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, an ulcer operation should be performed in the following manner:

> sätkamata palamukota yantra mantra āraksāda pulun mī gitel talatel mastelda kiren tarjanada ālēpa aushada sihilpänin ambaranalada aushadada mē ādi dravya sampādanayakota tabā kämativū bōjanayan anubhavakaravā vishakalā dāna marmastāna härа pilikaya obaobā puyā daknā tek paridarva kota dängulak hō tunagulak hō kapanu-bämaya kopulata dekisilla kalava mula mema stāna sarasata palanu-meyin pitat stāna ē ē gadayangē ojā nikmenasē palanu-popiyā vaguruvā härа nävata pasakuru kalka yodā kadin teta sinduvā gitel mīyen kalka behetlā tunvenuva upanāha bändа satara venuva vana sōdanada pasväniva kshāra tibīmada saväniva rōpana behetda satväniva käläl mäkīmada mesē pilivelin ē ē vidhi novaradavā kirīmen vana rogāturain suvapat karanu.
>
> Before the operation, appropriate incantations should be recited and the necessary rites should be performed(in order to protect the patient). Cotton, honey, ghee, sesame oil, animal fat, milk, refreshing medicinal pastes, and other substances should be kept ready. The patient should be given whatever he wishes to eat. The operation should not be performed under an unlucky

> constellation. The ulcer should be pressed, and having introduced the instrument in such a way that it does not strike a dangerous place, an incision two or three angulas long should be made. The incisions made on the temple, armpit or the upper part of the thigh should be horizontal. In other places the incisions should be made in such a way that the pus drains from the ulcer freely. Thereafter, the pus should be drained by pressing the wound. (Next) clean it with a piece of cloth and spread a layer of ghee and honey mixed with the principal medicines. Thirdly, apply a layer of the secondary medicines. Fourthly,(remove all these and) wash the wound. Fifthly, cauterize it. Sixthly, apply healing substances. Seventhly, remove the marks. In treating ulcer patients these rules should be followed correctly.[1]

A number of remedies were used against the bites of poisonous snakes and insects. 'In truth' says Ribeiro 'the land is full of medicinal herbs and many antidotes to poison which I have myself tried to learn as a remedy against snake-bites'.[2] Several writers refer to 'snake-stones', naigal, which the Sinhalese applied for all kinds of snake bites: '...This Stone is laid upon the Wound, and it sticks to it, till it hath drawn to itself all the Venom out of it. When

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.294.

2. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilao, p.156.

it is come off, it is laid in new Milk, which fetcheth all the Poison out of the Stone, and grows blue with it, and the Stone is again free of the Venom'.[1] 'The inhabitants indeed have an antidote, the 'snake-stone', with which they can combat the poison if speedily applied'.[2] '...But the snake-stone however, of which mention has been made, excels all other remedies'.[3] The wound inflicted by the snake was often scarified and the poison was sucked out. Scarification involved making a small incision on the bitten place to let out blood, in order to prevent the poison from penetrating in the body. '...Upon the sting they presently vomit blood' states Knox.[4] In this connexion the Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava states:

> palamukoṭa kā mukayen ihalaṭa visha yānodi bändа tabā pasuva visha yanṭa palamuven gitel povā lē härа damā etana mas kapā härа katin urā visha härа pasuva mema behet yodanu.

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1. Christopher Schweitzer, Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol.I., p. 54.
2. Martin Wintergerst, Travels in Ceylon, p.17.
3. Phillippus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.400.
4. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.184.

> First of all fasten a bandage above the bitten place, so that poison may not go up. Next, make the patient drink some ghee. Then scarify the bitten place and let out blood. Thereafter, suck out the poison with the mouth and give this medicine.[1]

In addition to various antidotes taken orally, other remedies such as the introduction of medicines in the nostrils and fumigation have been recommended for the cure of persons bitten by snakes. For example, some juice extracted from the leaves of the murunga tree and the tumba plant mixed with a little juice of a lemon was blown into the nose of the person suffering from the bite of the cobra, nayā.[2] The visha vidhiya prescribes the following nasal remedy for a cobra-bite.

> tippili sudu lūnut araganne
> mūnamal aṭada desi ämbuleni ganne
> ambarā mehäma nasna karanne
> nai visayaṭa at duṭuvai danne

> Take tippili, garlic and mūnamal seeds and crush them on a stone with juice of a lemon. Blow a little of the liquid extract of this pulp into the nose. Know that this is a good remedy against cobra's poison.[3]

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1. Vaidya cintāmani bhaisadya sangrahava, p.294.
2. Aṭduṭu behet pota, v.57.
3. Visha vidhiya, Or.6612(77), Fol.14., v.II.

Fumigations were also regarded as a part of this treatment. Presumably Baldaeus means this method of treatment when he says that persons bitten by snakes were made to 'keep the pores open by vapour bath or other means'.[1] The Atdutu behet pota recommends the following vapour bath against snake bites.

> maltumba kola kosamba nika kola kahada yana
> mē dē pāsena diya muttiye damā gena
> dā nāgenā rangata sitiyot ē langena
> nāvatī tibena sap visa yāya bāsagena
>
> Leaves of the maltumba, margosa and nika trees and turmeric should be put into a boiling pot. And(the patient) should be made to sweat by standing near it. If this is done all snake poisons will definitely come out.[2]

Some of the remedies prescribed against the bites of snakes were magical in character.[3] And even some

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1. Philippus Baldaeus, A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p.400.

2. Atdutu behet pota, v.60.

3. Knox repeatedly states that the Sinhalese used both 'charms and medicines' against snake bites: 'When the people are bitten by any of these, they are cured by Charms and Medicines, if taken and applyed in time'. 'They are oftentimes stung with venomous Serpents, upon which sudden death follows without speedy help: But if the bite be taken in time, they can certainly cure themselves, and make nothing of it. Which they perform both by Herbs and Charms'.; Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp.49,183.; In this connection

/continued on next page

of the herbal medicines were believed to be efficacious only when they were accompanied by the proper rites and spells. Thus after giving the antidote, the Sinhalese physician usually attempted to extract the venom by gently stroking the affected limb with a branch of the mango tree and reciting spells such as the following:

> on jaya jaya mucalinda nam nāga rājayā budungē srī his nastakaya tamangē pena gobayen muvā karagena ati gavrava pāvā satyavādi sābā vīnam cūlōdara mahōdara mahā nāgayan dennā mānik putuva venuven dabara karamin siti tānēdī budun vādi tānēdi srī patul vāndā satyavādi sābā vīnam sōnuttara nam rahatan vahansēta nāga lovata bāsa nā rajun anēka kannalav bas kiyaddīma dātu gena enta balayak dhairiyak tibunā satyavādī sabā vīnam mē vishaya varā attakin kiri binduvak ennā sē enu mē vishaya pāni vadayen pāni binduvak ennā sē enu mē vishaya bindunu kalayakin diya binduvak ennasē enu ē svaha.
>
> Ōn jaya jaya. If it be true that the great snake Muchalinda honoured the Buddha by covering his head with its hood; if it be true that the two great snakes Cūlōdara and Mahōdara quarrelled over a

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Footnote 3 continued from previous page:
Schweitzer too observes: 'Here are two sorts of Remedies against the Poison of these Animals: the one, which the Inhabitants use frequently, is Witchcraft, with Conjurations: The other, which I have often used, is a Serpent-Stone'. Christopher Schweitzer, Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol.I., p.54.

> throne of jewels, but later when the Buddha appeared they did reverence to his feet; if it be true that even the Arahant Sōnuttara had enough power and courage to go to the Nāga World and to bring the relics, in spite of the stern refusal of the Nāga king to give them, may this poison come out like a drop of milk coming out of a branch of a varā tree. May this poison come out like a drop of honey coming out of a honey-comb. May this poison come out like a drop of water coming out of a leaking pot, ē svaha.[1]

This kind of spell against the bites of snakes finds a special place in the Sinhalese medical treatises. The latter likewise discuss the limits of the art of medicine and magical ritual and caution the physician against proceeding to treat a person bitten by a snake, without watching for unfavourable signs and studying the appearance and behaviour of the messenger sent to fetch him. The case was considered unfavourable if the messenger arrived with dishevelled hair or fell on the ground as he arrived.[2] Sinhalese medical works dealing with the treatment of snake bites, often stress the necessity of watching for these and other unfavourable signs before commencing the treatment of a patient.

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1. Aṭdutu veda pota, p.59

2. Prayōga ratnāvali, pp.275, 276.; Sarpa dūtaya, Or.6612 (37), Fol.4, v.IX.; Siddhi sāraya, Or.6612(65), Fol.49.

Chapter VI

Old Age, Death and its Attendant Ceremonies

(a) Old Age

Some writers speak of the Sinhalese as a people who sometimes lived to a great age. Their observations also suggest that some of the old Sinhalese were remarkably hale and hearty: 'They live to a great age very often to fourscore, and hale at that age, the King's Sister was near an hundred.'[1] 'They live to a great age; I have known and frequently talked to two of them, father and son, the former being one hundred and twenty years and the latter ninety years of age.....I know others too of about the same age.'[2] 'Instances of great longevity are by no means rare in the Kandyan country; in Matale, I knew several persons upwards of one hundred years of age; and, immediately before leaving that place in 1837, I had the satisfaction of seeing one of them reap an excellent crop of rice, on the ground which he had himself, in the previous year, cleared from a thick forest, and then prepared with the hoe; he had also watched his field in an open hut, and protected it from

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 181.
2. Joao Ribeiro, History of Ceilão, p. 146.

the inroad of wild animals.'[1]

It is interesting to note that the Sinhalese have definite terms of kinship for paternal and maternal ascendants even beyond the great-grandfather; in fact, up to the seventh generation, hat mutu paramparāva.

The term for the grandfather was atta. The next six ascendants were called mutta, natta, panatta, kitta, kirikitta and sittatta consecutively[2]. Undoubtedly, such a relationship within seven generations was only a vague idea. The hat mutu paramparāva was often referred to in land disputes. Litigants sometimes swore to the truth of their respective claims by making declarations such as mē idama mata hat mutu paramparāven urumai, 'this land has descended to me through seven generations'.

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, pp. 160, 161; Some writers seem to think that the Sinhalese showed a general ignorance in regard to their ages. See J.C. Wolf, Life and Adventures, pp. 129, 130. However, it is rather difficult to subscribe to this view. As shown elsewhere, when a child was born the exact time of birth was noted and an astrologer was employed to cast the horoscope (see supra, p.113). It was customary for the Sinhalese to make use of this record in the estimation of age. It is interesting to note that even at the 1911 Census a number of old people who claimed themselves to be centenarians produced their horoscopes confirming the ages they had given. (See Ceylon at the Census of 1911, p. 377). It may, therefore, be said that ignorance in regard to the ages could not have been general.

2. Sinhalē Vidupota, p. 36.

There is not the least doubt that even a person who made such a bold claim could not have been able to trace his genealogy beyond three or four generations. The following statement of Forbes throws some light on the subject: 'Several of the highest rank of Kandyan chiefs pretend to trace the descent of their families from those natives of Maghada who accompanied Mihindoo and the relics of Buddha from the continent in the fourth century before Christ.....I have only seen a few written genealogies of Cingalese chiefs, and, in following them, found wider and more startling gaps than any I had been accustomed to leap over in a backward trace to the progenitor of some individuals who figure in the modern British peerage.'[1]

It has been the practice amongst the Sinhalese to hold old people in esteem and veneration. To the Sinhalese folk poets an old man was an impressive and honourable figure. He figures in many folksongs, and they often pay flattering attention to his personal qualities. The following folksong compares a certain venerable old man to the god Sakka. This is an apt simile, for Sakka is commonly believed to visit the human world in the guise of an old man.

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, pp. 230, 231.

mē vīlasa sakdev rajamala sē kadimai
ən nagina sīpada ovad raju gē semai
muven nagina sīpada ovadan musuvei
mal pudenna yana mage muttā kadimai
There goes our grandfather to offer flowers (at the temple). His beard is like a full bloomed palmyrah flower. His face is like that of king Sakka. A word of advice is always embodied in the Sīpada songs which he sings.[1]

The traditional Sinhalese social pattern demanded that young should be respectful and restrained towards elders, especially towards their parents and grandparents[2]. Those who repudiated this solemn obligation were likely to loose public esteem. Furthermore, they ran the risk of loosing their right of inheritance, and being left destitute, for it is clear that according to the law of inheritance which existed in Kandyan times, a father could disinherit any of his children who were unmindful of the virtues of filial piety. In this connexion Knox observes: '....they have certain antient (sic) usages and

1. Sivupada māle, p. 9; Usually old people devoted a considerable amount of their time to religious activities. Hence the Sinhalese proverb, mahalu unāma yakat tapas rakinta kāmatilu','even the devil wishes to be a hermit in old age . Atīta vākya dīpaniya, Ed. Alexander Mendis Senanayaka, p. 51.

2. See Bālōvādaya, Or. 6611 (13), Fol. 8, vv. IV, V; Dānamutu mālaya, Or. 6611 (236), Fol. 15, v. IV.

Customes (sic) that do prevail and are observed as Laws; .....To hint some of them, their Lands are hereditary, and do descend from Parents to their Children. But the eldest son by Priviledg (sic) of Birth-right does not possess and enjoy all the Land, but if the Father please he can divide it among his Children.'[1]

The position is further made clear by references in Sinhalese literary works. While reprobating the want of obedience on the part of children to their aged parents, the Upadēsa mālaya speaks of the material gains that could be acquired by being obedient and helpful to parents.

> mahalu bavaṭa paṭvū tama demavpiyan sondasē
> surëki ayaṭa delovama sëpa vei ena matu davasē
> melova demavpiya gam bim lëbēya nisi vilasē
> elova sura sëpat atvei visumaṭa niti suvasē
> Those who look after their aged parents well, will be rewarded with happiness in both worlds. In this world, they will inherit the parental estate smoothly and thereby be happy; while in the other world they will be able to enjoy divine pleasures[2].

Yet another work, Dänamutu mālaya, gives the same advice repeatedly.

> vëňda upakāra mavpiya haṭa karapanna
> sonda lesa vastu gam bin deti dänaganna

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 161.
2. Upadēsa mālaya, p. 16.

Worship your parents. Be helpful to them. Then they will be induced to give you riches and lands[1].

kīkaru uvot mavpiya e upakārayaṭa
devlova sāpat un deya atvei ohuṭa
If one is obedient to his parents, he will be able to enjoy the parental estate (and in his next birth) he will enjoy divine pleasures in heaven[2].

This evidence indicates that, to a certain extent, the heir to the parental estate was selected on the basis of his character. The most subservient ones may have received larger shares than the others. In this connexion Pieris rightly observes that 'the prospect of disherison was sufficient to prevent children from neglecting their filial duties.'[3]

The neglect of filial duties was not merely a secular matter, for it was believed that there were divine penalties awaiting the individual who treated his old parents unkindly.

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1. Dänamutu mālaya, Or. 6611 (236), Fol. 11, v. II. The term 'gam' etymologically means 'villages'. But here, according to context it means 'lands'. 'The Sinhalese gama, plural gam, normally signifies a village, but the word is applied to an estate or even to one field.' observes Codrington. Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon, p. 1.

2. Dänamutu mālaya, Or. 6611 (236), Fol. 25, v. III.

3. Ralph Pieris, The Sinhalese Social Organization, p. 224.

nirā dukaṭa paṭvena sāṭi danu kohoma
upā nodēna mavpiyanaṭa gārahīma
epā ovun haṭa kipi muhuṇak pāma
epā kuriru aṭa maha nirayehi vāṭuma
The surest way to fall in Hell is to ill-treat your mother and father. Do not even show an angry face to them. Thereby avoid being born in the eight dreadful hells[1].

The Kavmutuhara says that those who do not provide seats for their parents and other elders, and those who do not give way to them on the road or revere them, will be born as dogs and Candalas[2].

Furthermore, even the spirits of the dead parents were supposed to wreak vengeance on their descendants who neglected their filial duties. According to the Malaprēta kannalavva, old people, whether alive or dead, are very sensitive to any act of neglect or disobedience. And it speaks of the innumerable number of Prētas in the Prēta World who are disposed to send disease upon their descendants who had been illtreating them when they were alive.

ledaṭa behetak nodī
baḍaṭa kāmak nodī
inaṭa reddak nodī
un sitiye mulu vādī

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1. Sivupada mālē, p. 10.
2. Kavmutuhara, v. 60.

ē namut dän ovun
memage deya kana bävin
pelami niti leda dukin
ganimi pali ovun gen

prēta lōkayē sita
neka prēta mē lesata
tama kuriru daruvanata
sāpa deti nisi lesata

They never gave me medicine when I was sick. They never gave me anything to eat when I was hungry. They never gave me a piece of cloth for me to wear. They were not even to be seen at the time (I was in need of their help).

But now, they have begun to eat what I had earned. I must wreak vengeance on them by causing them to fall sick.

There are innumerable numbers of Prētas in the Prēta World, who thus keep on cursing their undutiful children[1].

It was believed that ancestor spirits who thus threaten to put pressure on their descendants could be kept calm only by the performance of elaborate ceremonies. The Malaprēta kannalavva has it that if the parents and other elders are properly looked after in their old age many of these troubles can be avoided[2]. There is no doubt that

1. Malaprēta kannalavva, p. 14.

2. Ibid, p. 15.

these beliefs were effective in the Sinhalese society in maintaining the superior status of old people and the conventional norms of kinship behaviour.

Sinhalese literary works constantly instil into the minds of the young the idea of respect for older people. They advise the younger generation to look to old people as teachers and guides and to refer to them in all situations in social and domestic life.

> gata dubalava giya mut mema lovata guruva āttē
> mahalu ayama bava kavrut sihiyata gatayuttē
> magul tulā gedara dorē katayutu gäna sattē
> gurukam läbumata dänamuttōmai sāka nättē
> Though devoid of physical strength, old people are the teachers of this world. It should be understood by all that they along know everything to do with matrimonial and other domestic affairs. These dänamutto should always be consulted in such matters[1].

It is noteworthy that the term dänamutto, 'the people who know', which occurs in this verse is a collective noun covering the entire community of old people. Obviously, the poet wants to make the young think that the aged are generally wise. The Dänamutu mālaya uses a similar term, dänamutu aya, 'those who know', in reference to old people[2]. The expression lokka, meaning 'great one' was also freely

1. Upadēsa mālaya, p. 7.

2. Dänamutu mālaya, Or. 6611 (236), Fol. 10, v. IV.

used in speaking of or to any old man[1]. In fact, the term mahalu, old or aged, itself has sometimes been used as synonymous with 'great'[2]. For example, in reference to some of the Sinhalese kings who were considered to be great, the Dalada pujavaliya, the Rajavaliya and the Sulu rajavaliya use the epithet mahalu. Thus Vijayabahu I is referred to as mahalu vijayabahu[3] while Parakramabahu the Great is designated parakrama mahalu maharaja[4].

Another way of showing respect to an old man was to add the suffix -atta, grandfather, to his name when addressing him, for, as far as respect was concerned, there was no distinction drawn between one's grandfather and other old men in the neighbourhood who belonged to his generation. Hence the term atta was used with reference to old men who were not necessarily relations. Thus a Sinhalese youth speaking to an old man whose personal name was Manikrala may sometimes have addressed him as Manikralatta. Curiously, even in the Land Rolls or registers of land (lekammiti) personal names are sometimes

1. Sammata janakav, p. 19.
2. See Sri Sumangala Dictionary, Part III, p. 713.
3. Rajavaliya,, p. 66; Sulu rajavaliya, p. 21.
4. Sulu rajavaliya, p. 21; In the Dalada pujavaliya Parakramabahu the Great is called mahalu perakumba maharajanan. p. 30.

given in that form. For example, the Udavalavvē lēkammitiya gives two names in the following form:

hataraliyaddē jāsinatta[1]
goḍigamuvē puncirālatta[2]

What can be inferred is that these two men, Jāsinha of Hataraliyadda and Puncirāla of Goḍigamuva being old people, the officers who compiled the register added the suffix -atta to their personal names out of respect. It is possible, though perhaps unlikely, that when asked to give the name, the two old men uttered their personal names together with the special terms of address which their neighbours used when speaking to them.

Since old people were looked up to with reverence and submission, it is not surprising to find that in ceremonial and some other important activities an old man or woman was always present to give guidance. We have already pointed out the importance of the role old people played in various ceremonies connected with the crises of life. For instance, an old woman was the key person in ceremonies connected with childbirth[3]. It was preferably by the grandfather that a child was ceremonially fed and named[4]. Above all, according to the

1. Udavalavvē lēkammitiya, p. 4.
2. Ibid, p. 5.
3. See supra, p.108.
4. See supra, p.128.

traditional custom of the Sinhalese, the elder members of the family selected the marriage partner for their offspring, having satisfied themselves with due agreement of horoscopes[1].

As in ceremonial and domestic activities, so in public service, too, old people had an important part to play. Many distinguished authorities are unanimously agreed that in Kandyan times, the gamsabāva or village council consisted of an assembly of the village elders: 'The village council was composed of the head of every family residing within its limits, however low his rank, or small his property: from this tribunal, there was an appeal to the district council, which consisted of intelligent delegates from each village in the Pattoo or subdivision of a district.'[2] It seems that this council functioned as a court of law as well as an administrative body[3]. The question then arises whether the village elders who formed it were versed in judicial matters.

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1. See supra, pp. 178 ff.

2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 71. Cf. also Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 84; John D'Oyly, A Sketch of the Constitution of Ceylon, p. 28.

3. H.W. Codrington, Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon, pp. 2,3. Knox refers to these councils as 'Countrey (sic)-Courts of Judicature'. See An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 84.

Presumably, they were not. But since the gamsabāva endeavoured to settle disputes by compromise rather than by condemning one party, there is no doubt that these elders who had good knowledge of customary law were capable of adjudicating the cases which came before them to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

The Sinhalese, according to several sources, were 'a very litigious people'[1]. But the control which the gamsabāva exercised in the village may have prevented the people from spending their wealth and time in long litigations. In this connection Forbes observes: 'Village councils were indispensable, in a country where landed property is so minutely divided, and consanguinity so entangled as in Ceylon.'[2] Of course, the litigants were at liberty to appeal to a higher official if dissatisfied with the decision given by the village elders: 'In an ordinary dispute about land, which was the most common subject of litigation, the disputants usually commenced with referring it to be settled by the arbitration of their

1. 'Though acts of assault and violence are rarely heard of amongst the Singalese, they are a very litigious people; which perhaps arises rather from external circumstances than innate disposition.' John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 182. Cf. also Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p.72.

2. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 71.

neighbours: if dissatisfied with the decision given, they might apply to the Korawl, and from the Korawl to the Mohottala, and from him to the Dissave: if still dissatisfied, they might apply to the Adikar, or even to the King.'[1] By the term 'neighbours', which occurs in this passage, Davy obviously means the village elders who formed the gamsabāva or the village council. These were the individuals who had come to the top by virtue of their wisdom and experience; and the Sinhalese, like many other Asian peoples, generally believed that these qualities come to a person with age. This is why Sinhalese literary works constantly advised the younger generation to look to the old people as teachers and guides[2]. Moreover, as living links with the past, these old men were considered to be conversant with the ancient customs and traditions which the people held in esteem[3]. This is another point

1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 183. In this connexion Knox observes: 'For the hearing Complaints and doing Justice among Neighbours, here are Countrey(sic) Courts of Judicature....and these are called Gom sabbi, as much as to say, Town-Consultations. But if any do not like, and is loath to stand by what they have determined, and think themselves wronged, they may appeal to their Head-Governor, that dwells at Court; but it is chargeable, for he must have a fee. They may appeal also from him to the Adigars, or the Chief Justices of the Kingdom.' An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p.84.

2. See supra, p.346.

3. See supra, p.348.

they had in their favour, for thereby they came to be regarded as capable of discussing and deciding almost any issue pertaining to the village community.

Thus it is clear that in Sinhalese society there was a general tendency to attribute a superior position to old people in almost all spheres of social activities, and that the head of the family was actually or potentially a leader of the village community. It is, however, important to stress that, although experienced senior men had the decisive voice in the affairs of the family and the community, the hierarchy of age and seniority does not appear to have been considered as something hard to put up with. This is not surprising, for even the grandparents, who were looked up to with reverence and submissive respect by the grandchildren, showed a proverbial affection and indulgence towards the latter.

> attaṛe hakuru kēṭē raha munupurāgen ahanna ōnā
> If you want to know whether the grandfather's piece of jaggery is sweet, you should inquire about it from the grandson.
>
> nikam handana muttēta munupurek mārunā vagei
> Like the death of a great-grandson to the great-grandfather who weeps easily.[1]

Further despite the fact that the grandfather enjoyed a

1. Atīta vākya dīpaniya, p. 41. Hakuru or jaggery is 'a coarse kind of sugar from the juice of different palms.' John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 127.

specially privileged position in the family, it was not unusual for him to look after the welfare of his children and grandchildren and also to be openly affectionate towards them. The following verse from the Sivupada mālē compares such a man to a tree which ungrudgingly bears all the weight of its branches, fruits and leaves.

> gasē atu patara nan desa vihida yatē
> visēsayen ehi pala kola hata ganitē
> kesē namut gasa mē häma räka ganitē
> daru munuburu rakina mahalun lovehi ätē
> A tree has many branches which run in various directions. And on these branches there are fruits and leaves. But the tree not only looks after the branches, but also the fruits and leaves. Similarly, there are many old men in this world who lovingly look after not only their children but also their grandchildren[1].

Writing concerning the strong bonds of trust and affection which seem generally to have prevailed between the senior and the junior members of the family, Davy observes: 'As fathers and mothers, as sons and daughters, the Singalese appear in a more amiable light.....Amongst few people, I believe, are family attachments more strong and sincere: there is little to divert or weaken them; and they are strengthened equally by their mode of life and their religion. A family is the focus in which all

1. Sivupada mālē, p. 13.

the tender affections of a native are concentrated. Parents are generally treated with the greatest respect and regard; and children with extraordinary affection.. ...Generally they are attentive to their sick, especially their parents and children, and are not wanting in any kind offices towards them.'[1] Thus it is evident that, although the older people of the family were treated with unfailing obedience and respect, in everyday life, strong bonds of affection generally prevailed between the different members of the older and the younger generations.

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp.. 287, 289.

(b) Death and its Attendant Ceremonies

Ever since its introduction to Ceylon Buddhism has wielded great influence over many spheres of Sinhalese life. Nevertheless it is striking that Buddhist monks did not play any significant part in any of the Sinhalese ceremonials which were purely domestic and private in character. For example, in none of the ceremonies which surrounded events such as birth[1], puberty[2] and marriage[3] did the monks play an important role. However, in the great crisis of death, monks had a definite part to play. Thus, when a person was seriously ill and it became obvious that his end was near his relatives and friends summoned a monk to conduct a religious ceremony (pinkama) called gōdāna. How the gōdāna ceremony derived its name is clearly seen. It appears that this ceremony was borrowed with modifications from the Hindus. When a Hindu was on his death-bed he offered a cow to a brahmin. It was believed that this cow would lead the dying person 'by a happy road into the other world'. This offering of a cow was called gōdāna. Writing concerning this Hindu rite Dubois observes: 'The cow is led up to

1. See supra, pp. 107 ff.
2. See supra, pp. 149 ff.
3. See supra, pp. 216 ff.

the sick person, who takes her by the tail, and at the same time the purohita recites a mantram praying that the cow may lead the dying Brahmin by a happy road into the other world. The latter then makes a present of the animal to some other Brahmin, into whose hand he poures a few drops of water in token of the gift. This gift of a cow is called godana; and is indispensable if one wishes to arrive without mishap in Yama-loka, or the kingdom of Yama, the king of hell.'[1] Hinduism wielded a considerable influence on the inhabitants of the island during the Kandyan period, and it is likely that the Sinhalese applied the Hindu term gōdāna to denote their own religious ceremony conducted when a person was on his death-bed. The following observation made by Dickson gives some idea of the nature of the Sinhalese gōdāna ceremony: 'This pinkama, called in Sinhalese gōdāne, takes place when a man thinks himself soon about to die. The priest of the village vihārē (temple) officiates. A few days' notice is usually given, and on the appointed day the man's sons and relations go in the evening to the vihārē.....and thence conduct the priest with his bana book to the house, where a temporary preaching hall is made ready. After the priest has finished his

1. Abbé J.A. Dubois, Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies, p. 483.

evening meal, the sick man and his relations assemble to hear bana. On these occasions the priest reads and explains some portions of a Sinhalese book, such as the Ratnāvaliya. This lasts for about six English hours.....

Next morning the priest is supplied with his morning meal. His mid-day meal is made ready with great ceremony, and when it is over the following offerings are made: a brass water pot, a lamp, a spitting pot, a bill-hook, a mamoty, an adze, an axe, a chisel, a mat and a pillow, a basin and a plate, some fruit and some cooked food, and the usual small boxes in which the articles used by betel-chewers are carried - in short, all the ordinary articles of daily use.'[1] Dickson's observation does not suggest that cattle were gifted to the monks at the Sinhalese gōdāna ceremony. This may perhaps lead one to venture upon the view that the Sinhalese borrowed the term gōdāna (offering of cattle) from the Hindus without comprehending the spirit and full significance of the Hindu ceremony which bore that name. However, we have a large number of olas of gift styled gōdāna patra, which point to the conclusion

1. J.F. Dickson, 'Notes Illustrative of Buddhism as the Daily Religion of the Buddhists of Ceylon', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1884, VIII/29, pp. 231-233.

that cattle were among the presents given to the monks at this ceremony. These deeds were executed by old persons who felt that their end was near, and wished to transfer some of their property to the community of the monks, in order to gain merit for the next world. The following is an extract from such a deed which helps us to establish that it was not unusual to gift cattle to the monks at the gōdāna ceremony.

> ....maḍuvanvela vijēsundara ēkanāyaka abhayakōn mudiyansē rālahāmy vana magē āsannayedi mata svarga mōksha sampat lābena pinisa mā santakin maḍuvanvela viharastānayata....alut asšädduma vi pas pāle vapasariyada rukulē kumburē godahēnada kitalabokkē vattada maha kukulā pānada loku naipena padikkamada mī denek ela denekda mema cancala niscala dē matu kī viharastānayata ihata kī mavisin pūjā kara pin anumōdan unemi
>
> ....I Vijēsundara Ēkanayaka Abhayakōn Mudiyansē of Maḍuvanvela having realized that my end is near, donated to the Vihāra at Maḍuvanvela.. ....the following portions of my property viz. five pālas in sowing extent out of the paddy field (called) Alutasvädduma, the chēna-land at Rukulēkumbura, the garden at Kitalabokka, a large cock-shaped lamp, a large snake hood-shaped spittoon, a female buffalo and a cow, so that I may attain divine happiness (in the next life). Having donated these immovable and movable property to the aforesaid Vihāra I gathered much merit.[1]

1. Saparagamuvē pārani liyavili, p. 207.

Another gōdāna patraya dated saka 1725 (A.D. 1803) mentions one Vīrahin Vidāne, who, when on his death-bed, donated to the monks land, plates, cups, clothes and a female buffalo[1].

There is no doubt that the custom of conducting a religious ceremony when a person was on his death-bed come down from earlier times. For instance the Saddharmaratnāvaliya, a thirteenth-century work, speaks of one such ceremony styled the āsanna karma[2]. But we are at a loss to discover whether this rite was accompanied by the offering of cattle and other property to the monks.

When a person was on the point of death, he sometimes endeavoured to purify his last thoughts by recollecting his meritorious activities performed in the past, for it was believed that a pious thought immediately before death would help one to be born in a better world in the next life. Thus Kāppiṭipola, the leader of the Kandyan rebellion of 1818 who was tried by a court-martial, and condemned to death, is said to have recollected his meritorious deeds performed in the past, immediately before he was executed. A writer of the day thus describes this touching incident: 'Kneeling before the priest, upon

1. Saparagamuvē pāraṇi liyavili, p. 167.

2. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 758.

the threshhold of the sanctuary, the repository of the sacred relic, the chief detailed the principal meritorious actions of his life, - such as the benefits he had conferred on priests, together with the gifts he had bestowed on temples, and other acts of piety.....The prisoners were then taken to the place of execution.... The chief continued to repeat some Pali verses; and while he was so employed, the executioner struck him on the back of his neck with a sharp sword.'[1] The custom of recollecting one's meritorious deeds on the point of death appears to have been an old one, for the Mahāvamsa states that when King Dutthagāmini was on his death-bed he got the scribe to read his 'book of meritorious deeds' in which his religious activities such as establishing and maintaining monasteries, making arrangements for holding religious ceremonies and festivals had been recorded[2].

This is indeed an ingenious way of consoling a person nearing his death. One may very often see this ancient practice persisting yet.

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1. Henry Marshall, Ceylon, pp. 218, 219.

2. Mahāvamsa, p. 222; Commenting on the 'Merit-Book' Rāhula Thera writes that it 'was intended to be read at the death-bed, so that the dying man might gladden his heart and purify his last thoughts to ensure a good birth'. Walpola Rāhula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon, p. 254.

It was also customary to employ a monk to preach a sermon (bana) in order to help the dying person to keep his mind free from worldly attachments and also to make him understand that death is a natural and inevitable phenomenon. The Saddharmaratnāvaliya refers to this practice when it mentions a person who 'having come close to the darkness of death wished to listen to bana', marana andurata āsannava bana asanu kämativa.[1] In this connexion Dickson states: 'When a man is at the point of death he generally sends for the priest, who, after repeating the Three Refuges and the Five Commandments, reads to him that portion of the Satipatthāna suttam which sets forth the unprofitableness of having regard for the body.'[2] Perhaps Knox too means the custom of preaching bana to dying persons when he says: '....when any man is minded to provide for his soul, they bring one of these Priests.....he must sing Bonna, that is matter concerning their Religion out of a Book made of leaves of Tallipot.'[3] When the dying person

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1. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 146.
2. J.F. Dickson, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1884, VIII/29, p. 233.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 119.

was at his last gasp, his close relatives put a little water into his mouth[1]. This was considered an important rite. In fact a common form of curse among the Sinhalese is, 'may there be no person near you to put a little water into your mouth in the hour of death' (pana adina velāvēta katata vatura podak dännavat kenek nätivecceve). According to Perera, if the dying person was found to be fond of his earthly belongings, and seemed to delay in quitting life, some of his furniture was washed and a little of the water was put into his mouth[2].

Several writers state that when all signs indicated that a person was nearing his death, he was sometimes removed to a temporary building, as the house in which death took place was deemed to be infected with death-pollution. Referring to this practice Forbes observes: 'As prejudice and habit have concurred in producing the universal impression amongst Kandians that a dead body pollutes the house, they generally remove any expiring

1. According to K. Jinānanda this rite was performed by one of the nephews of the deceased. Ape sirit virit, p. 77; This custom was observed in a similar way by many Hindu castes and tribes of India. See E. Thurston, Ethnographic Notes in India, pp. 205, 206. According to Dubois, it was the custom among the brahmins to pour a 'few drops of the panca gavia into the mouth of the dying man'. See Abbe J.A. Dubois, Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies, p. 482.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 3.

relation into some detached apartment, and place him with his head to the east.'[1] Davy not only refers to this practice but also mentions an erroneous notion which it helped to create, namely, that the Sinhalese adopted a callous behaviour towards their sick relatives: 'I have heard another assertion made, of a character with the preceding, and no better founded, viz. that the natives neglect their sick relations, - indeed not merely neglect them, but cruelly turn them out of their houses, or throw them into the jungle to perish. This erroneous notion arose perhaps from the circumstance, that a person dangerously ill is frequently placed in an adjoining temporary building, that, should he die, the house may escape pollution.'[2]

With the passing away of life, it was customary for the women folk to burst into wailing and loud lamentations. Some writers think that in many instances this vocal demonstration of grief was highly exaggerated. Continuous wailing appears to have been considered necessary to maintain the atmosphere of sorrow. The observation made by Knox suggests this: 'Their manner of mourning for the dead is, that all the Women that are present do loose

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1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 334.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 289.

their hair, and let it hang down, and with their two hands together behind their heads do make an hideous noise, crying and roaring as loud as they can, much praysing and extolling the Virtues of the deceased, tho there were none in him: and lamenting their own woful condition to live without him. Thus for three or four mornings they do rise early, and lament in this manner, also on evenings. Meanwhile the men stand still and sigh.

These women are of a very strong couragious spirit taking nothing very much to heart, mourning more for fashion than affection, never overwhelmed neither with grief or love. And when their Husbands are dead, all their care is where to get others, which they cannot long be without.'[1] Schweitzer and Heydt go to the extent of suggesting that there was a peculiar custom of hiring old women to mourn over dead[2]. A Sinhalese folk tale, too, refers to such a practice[3].

Immediately after death, the head of the corpse was turned towards the west. And before the rigor mortis set in, the legs were stretched and toes were tied together; while the hands were placed on the chest.

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 185.
2. Christopher Schweitzer, Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 47; Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 140.
3. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. III, p. 214.

Next the body was washed and carefully prepared to look its best. Davy observes: '....their first duty is to turn the head of the corpse to the westward. Then they decently compose the limbs, tie the great toes together, place the expanded hands on the chest, wash the body, dress it in its best clothes, and deck it with the ornaments worn during life.'[1] The body was usually watched over day and night. At least one attendant remained constantly with it. It was also the custom to place a lamp burning at the head of the corpse[2].

The moment the news of the death[3] spread in the village, visitors began to gather at the house of the deceased to express their sympathy by their presence.

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1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 290; Forbes makes a similar observation: 'If the sickness terminates fatally, the position of the corpse is altered; the head is then turned to the west, the great toes are tied together, and the body is arrayed with the best dress and ornaments usually worn by the deceased.' Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 334; The Hindus too arranged the body in a similar manner before it was exposed to view: '...his nails trimmed, his body washed, and his great toes tied together with a bundle of twigs to efface his footprints lest death should come back by them to the house, he was anointed with nard....' Lionel D. Barnett, Antiquities of India, p. 147.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 3.

3. When informing of a death, the regular term for death, namely, märunā was sometimes avoided. Instead of bluntly saying 'so and so is dead', an euphemism such as venda tiyana dē unā, 'the thing that has to happen has happened' was used. See H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 55.

Very often they brought with them contributions of food-stuffs and the like for presentation to the members of the family of the deceased . The Saddharmālankāraya testifies to the fact that this custom was prevalent in Ceylon even in the earlier times:

> apagē daruvan maḷa kalhi apa depakshayehi nāyan hā sesu yahalu mitrayō epavat asā apa samīpayaṭa enakala yamtam vīnamut kana bona deyak āragena ennāhumaya.
> When our relatives and friends hear that our child is dead, they are sure to visit us bringing with them at least something to eat[1].

It was the custom not to cook in a funeral-house. The neighbours usually undertook the task of providing the mourning family with food[2].

There was no definite rule as to the length of time a corpse was kept in the house. If any of the near relatives whose presence was required had not arrived, disposal of the corpse was often postponed in order to allow time for them to attend the funeral[3]. Moreover, if the deceased was a courtier, the king's permission had

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1. Saddharmālankāraya, p. 361.

2. In this connexion Perera observes: 'All the time the body is in the house nothing is cooked, and the inmates eat the food supplied by their neighbours (adukku).' Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p.3.

3. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 93.

to be obtained before he was cremated or buried. Sometimes this necessitated the postponement of the funeral, and there is no doubt that the Sinhalese knew an effective method of preserving dead bodies. Whilst dealing with the customs connected with the dead, Knox not only describes a method used by the Sinhalese for preserving dead bodies, but also mentions the fact that if the deceased was a courtier, the body was not disposed of, without the king's permission: 'This is when they burn the Body speedily. But otherwise, they cut down a Tree that may be proper for their purpose, and hollow it, like a Hog-trough, and put the Body being Embowelled and Embalmed into it, filled up all about with Pepper. And so let it lay in the house, until it be the King's Command to carry it out to the burning. For that they dare not do without the King's order, if the Person deceased be a Courtier. Sometimes the King gives no order in a great while, it may be not at all. Therefore in such cases, that the Body may not take up house-room, or annoy them, they dig an hole in the floar of their house, and put hollowed tree and all in and cover it. If afterwards the King commands to burn the Body, they take it up again in obedience to the King, otherwise there it lyes.'[1] Heydt too mentions this strange custom:

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 186.

'If however the deceased were in royal service, or his nearest relatives are in it, then the King must give leave for the burning, which decision is slow to be obtained. Hence to preserve the body they take out the bowels, cut a trough from a tree, put the corpse in this, and sprinkle it over and over with pepper, which preserves it from decay and all evil smell, and no vermin breed in it until it is burned.'[1] The principle underlying this royal decree seems to have been the king's claim to a share of the property that belonged to a deceased chief. It is evident that on the death of a chief the king levied a tax on his property. This death duty was called marāla or malāra[2]. According to Paranavitana this word 'most probably, is derived from Skt mṛta "dead" and hāra "what is taken" and would etymologically mean "what is taken from dead person"'[3]. He further says that according to 'Sinhalese institutions, when a person died all his movable properties passed to the king if he had no male heir; otherwise, one-third of it belonged to the king.'[4] The Sangarajavata, an eighteenth century

1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 140.
2. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 77.
3. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 65.
4. Ibid.

Sinhalese poem thus refers to this duty levied on the property of deceased chiefs:

> mätivarun malə viṭa
> ovungē aduvädiyaṭa
> lēkam balā siṭə
> pähara säma badu ganiti raja geṭa
>
> When chiefs die, the (king's) secretary goes to their houses (to collect the duties due from them). After making the assessment he removes (almost) everything that belonged to them to the king's palace[1].

Codrington mentions yet another tax levied by the king before the cremation of a dead body was allowed. This was known as bim-pulutu, literally 'soil-burning'[2]. The king was considered the 'lord of the earth' (bhūpati), and the fee bim-pulutu was levied for 'burning the king's soil at the cremation of a dead body'[3]. Since the king expected the relatives of the deceased to settle these death duties before the disposal of the body, there is no doubt that in the majority of such cases the body had to be preserved until it was done. However, there is no evidence to say that the above mentioned taxes were levied from the ordinary people.

There were two methods of disposal of dead bodies

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1. Sangarajavata, v. 231.
2. H.W. Codrington, Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon, p. 5.
3. Ibid.

among the Sinhalese, namely, cremation and burial[1]. Monks, those belonging to the higher castes and other prominent people were usually cremated. But among the

1. Sinhalese literary works sometimes refer to the practice of throwing the corpse into the jungle. Saddharmaratnāvaliya, p. 179; Purāṇa kōlam kavi pota, v. 375. The following verse from the Kav mutu hara thus refers to this practice:

koi dinakavat taniva kelinā puta dēka mava
ema kalā
āi anē putu tani kalōdāi gedara kāṭat bāna
dodālā
doi kiyā nalavana eputu mārunāma bēddē damālā
koi kenek vat langaṭa nomavet balu kaputu
kati irālā

If a mother sees her son playing alone, she is sure to reproach all at home with the words, 'why did you leave my son in solutude?' When this son, who is lulled to the tune of lullabies, dies, he is thrown into the jungle. Only the dogs and the crows who tear and eat him up approach him thereafter. v. 58.

Whether this method of disposal of the dead was very common it is difficult to say; but it seems reasonable to consider that this custom may have prevailed to a certain extent in some of the out of the way places such as Ūva, for here the term miniya kälē gahanavā, 'throwing the corpse into the jungle', is still frequently used even in reference to burial, in spite of the fact that its meaning is quite lost today.

ordinary people the commonest mode of disposal appears to have been burial: 'It may not be unacceptable to relate how they bury their Dead. As for Persons of inferior Quality, they are interred in some convenient places in the Woods, there being no set places for Burial, carried thither by two or three of their Friends, and Buried without any more ado.....

But Persons of greater quality are burned and that with Ceremony.'[1] Davy states that low castes were 'not allowed to burn their dead', and that it was customary for them to 'bury the corpse, with little ceremony, in a grave three or four feet deep, with its head to the west.'[2]

Forbes agrees with Knox and Davy when he observes that only the 'bodies of priests, or those of the highest ranks, were permitted to be burned; others were interred in a grave with the head still to the west.'[3] This evidence suggests that the mode of the disposal of the corpse depended on the predetermined status of the deceased.

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1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 185.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 291.
3. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 335; See also Charles Pridham, An Historical, Political and Statistical Account of Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 257.

When preparations for the funeral had been made, some nearest relatives of the deceased placed the body on a bier called dena[1]. It is striking that no reference to a coffin is found in the Sinhalese literary works written prior to the advent of the Europeans. The usual practice was to lay the corpse on the bier after wrapping it up in a strip of cloth or a mat[2]. The Mandāram pura puvata says that the body of king Sri Vijaya Rājasiṃha was wrapped in costly silk cloths 'in accordance with the ancient custom' before it was placed on the bier[3]. After placing the body on the bier the

1. The size and beauty of the bier depended on the worldly circumstances of the relatives of the deceased. In the case of poor it was merely a hurriedly constructed stretcher. A Sinhalese folk-tale refers to a bier made of two bamboo poles tied together. H. Parker, Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon, Vol. II, p. 73. Knox mentions that the body was sometimes 'wrapped up in a mat upon a pole' before being taken to the funeral place. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 184. In the case of rich, however, a costly bier appears to have been used. Describing the funeral obsequies of the crown prince Mahāastāna, Baldaeus observes that his 'body was conveyed to the pyre, in a superbly covered couch or bed of gold studded with precious stones.' A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 58. Knox too mentions the custom of carrying dead bodies on beds and observes that it was 'a great honour' to do so. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 186.

2. Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon, p. 230.

3. Mandāram pura puvata, v. 617.

face was covered with a strip of cloth supplied by the washerman[1]. As has already been shown the washerman was indispensable in some of the ceremonies connected with the crises of life[2], and in the funeral ceremonies, too, he played an important role.

Immediately before the body was taken out of the house all those present came forward and saluted it in the manner customary among the Sinhalese[3].

When everything was ready, close relatives of the deceased lifted the bier upon their shoulders amidst

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1. A twelfth-century inscription refers to a dispute between the blacksmiths and the washermen, which arose as a result of the latter's refusal to perform the service of supplying 'foot-clothes, and clothes for the covering the faces of the dead' for the former, as the latter considered themselves higher in the social scale than the former. Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. III, p. 307. This reference bears testimony to the fact that the washermen had been performing the service of supplying cloths for covering the faces of the dead from early times. Further, this inscription makes it clear that the washermen performed this service only for those of higher castes than themselves. However, since the govi caste, which was supposed to be the highest in the social scale, included the bulk of the population, and also since the washer caste was rated very low according to the gradations of inter-caste regulations (Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 106 ff.), there is no doubt that the washermen had to perform the above mentioned service for a large percentage of the community.

2. See supra, pp.156,219

3. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.

loud lamentations uttered in heart-broken accents[1].

The funeral procession was then formed consisting of the body on the bier, preceded by the drummers and pipers and followed by relatives and friends of the dead carrying different articles such canopies, small earthen vessels containing fried paddy (vilanda) and scented water[2]. Usually the funeral procession proceeded

1. Forbes says that 'if the deceased left little property, and no relations were forthcoming, it was sometimes difficult to get persons for any hire to bear the corpse to the burial-ground.' Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.IE,p.334 But under normal circumstances it was customary for the people in the neighbourhood to gather at funeral-houses, without even a formal invitation. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 3. The Sinhalese funeral was a joint effort and normally it was considered a solemn duty to honour the dead by acting as the pall-bearers or by accompanying the bier. This indeed is the position in Ceylon even today. It may be noticed, however, that there was a belief that those who came into contact with a dead body were instantly seized with pollution which could be removed only by a purificatory bath. Kili dōsaya, v. 23; Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 184. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 289. It is possible that this fear of pollution was sometimes used as an excuse to avoid the unpleasant task of carrying a corpse to the funeral place. But it is not reasonable to consider that the Sinhalese were generally neglectful of their dead.

2. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.; Sangarajavata, v. 202; Mandāram pura puvata, v. 621. Davy states that if the dead were a person of high rank, as a maha-nilame or disave, the corpse was carried in a palanquin. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 290; In this connexion Forbes too states that the 'body of one of the principal chiefs, or any of their family, was conveyed to the funeral pile on a sort of open palanquin, borne by slaves and attended by the relations.' Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol.I, p. 334. We do not come across detailed descriptions

(Continued on the next page)

along a specially appointed route, which was sometimes strewn with white sand.

Monks who were invited to be present, awaited the arrival of the corpse at the funeral place. Their duty was to perform the last religious rites for the purpose of imparting merits to the deceased[1]. The religious ceremony commenced with the administration of the five

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of funeral processions of ordinary people. However, several writers give vivid descriptions of funeral processions of members of royal families and monks. Baldaeus thus describes the magnificent funeral procession of crown prince Mahāstana: 'The body was conveyed to the pyre, in a superbly covered couch or bed of gold studded with precious stones.
It was preceded by the deceased's musicians clad in black linen or ginghams, then followed the musqueteers or lancers in ranks of threes, and next the rondeliers, shield bearers and halbardiers with sloped arms, then moved the war elephants led by 40 noblemen and these were succeeded by 8 stately Persian horses led by 8 gentlemen of the order of the Golden Sun, followed by the chamberlains according to their rank and standing....Then followed the body, borne by 8 principal lords, and immediately after it the deceased prince's palanqueen or rosbaar, surrounded by 16 men bearing large fans, 4 white parasols, and 8 white sun screens, 6 betel boxes, and a rod of which none but the Emperor should carry. His Imperial Majesty followed it supported by the princes of Migonne and Mewater, after them came all the great men of state, and other rulers of the land and the public in general who assembled in large from the adjacent villages.' A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, pp. 58, 60.

1. J.F. Dickson, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch),1884,VIII/29,p.233;Arthur A.Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.

precepts (pansil) to those present at the occasion[1]. Next, the strip of cloth with which the corpse was covered was presented to the monks[2]. This rite was known as pānsukūlaya pūjā kirīma, the name being derived from the pānsukūla cīvara or rag robe. It may be noticed in passing that in the early days of Buddhism monks sometimes made their robes out of strips of clothes thrown away in such places as grave-yards[3]. In later times this practice may have given rise to the custom of offering the cloth with which a corpse was covered to the monks who performed the last religious rites by the grave-side.

Whilst accepting the cloth (pānsukūlaya) the monks uttered the following Pāli verse three times signifying the impermanence of all organic and inorganic matter:

> aniccā vata sankhārā uppādavayadhammino
> uppajjitvā nirujjhantī tesam vupasamo sukho
> Indeed all component things are impermanent.
> Their nature is to be born and pass away.
> (Therefore) their tranquillity is happiness[4].

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1. Mandāram pura puvata, v. 625; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.

2. J.F. Dickson, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1884, VIII/29, p. 233; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.; See also K. Jinananda, Ape sirit virit, p. 68.

3. See Walpola Rāhula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon, p. 153.

4. Bauddha pratipatti dīpaniya, p. 13. See also Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses ofSinghalese Social Life, p. 4.

This was followed by the rite of pānvādīma, literally 'pouring water'. Members of the family of the deceased poured water out of a spouted vessel into another vessel uttering the following lines three times.

> idam mē gnātīnam hōtu
> sukhitā hontu gnātayō
> Let these (merits) reach the (departed) relatives. May the relatives be happy[1].

As the vessel got filled with water the monks recited the following Pāli verse:

> yatā vārivahā purā paripūrenti sāgaram
> evameva itō dinnan pētānam upakappati
> The merits thus given reach the dead even as swollen rivers fill the ocean[2].

The religious ceremony then came to an end with a sermon by one of the monks. Usually the monk spoke on the virtues of the deceased in addition to other subjects such as the impermanence of worldly things[3].

After the religious ceremony the monks left the place while the funeral party turned to the next stage in the proceedings. If the body was to be cremated it was taken three times round the pyre and laid on it with the head

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1. See Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4; Bauddha pratipatti dipaniya, p. 13.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

pointing westwards. The observations made by the writers of the day suggest that the funeral pyre was a substantial structure built of several layers of wood and other material. 'The funeral pile consisted of' Forbes writes, 'alternate layers of dry and green wood, about four feet in height, secured by stakes at the sides, and with strong posts at the corners ornamented with cocoa-nut leaves.'[1] Davy states that the pyre consisted 'of a layer of cocoa-nut shells, a layer of the husks of the cocoa-nut, and an upper layer of wood, altogether about three feet high, confined by strong stakes', and that the body was 'laid on the pile and covered with wood, to the height of about three feet more'[2]. Knox has made the following observation in this connexion: 'There they lay it upon a Pile of Wood some two or three foot high. Then they pile up more Wood upon the Corps.....Over all they have a kind of Canopy built, if he be a Person of very high Quality covered at top, hung about with painted Cloth, and bunches of Coker-nuts, and green Boughs; and so fire is put to it.'[3] Usually two nephews of the deceased were called to set fire to the pyre. Taking two culu torches

1. Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, vol. I, pp. 334, 335.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 290.
3. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 186.

they circumambulated the pyre three times anti-clockwise, with their hands crossed behind their backs. Then, after saluting the pyre, one set fire to it at the foot of the corpse while the other lighted the pyre at the head of the corpse. This they did with their faces turned away from the pyre[1].

When the pyre was ablaze it was fed with more wood; and if the deceased was a person of position such as a member of the royal family, the fire was 'fed with oil, and pitch, and sandal-wood, and various perfumes.'[2] As the fire began to grow in volume the funeral party dispersed leaving a few elderly men in charge of the burning dead body.

Early next morning the relatives of the deceased returned to the place of cremation and sprinkled water charmed by recitation of pirit over the ashes[3]. This

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1. See K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.; Before setting fire to the pyre sometimes a simple rite called dena-ketilla was performed. The two nephews of the deceased went round the pyre three times, striking it with axes. Each time they did so they were asked by those present, 'Whose dena (bier) are you striking?' To which the men concerned replied 'We are striking the dena of our uncle.' See K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p.70.
2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 161. Baldaeus says that the fire was fed with large quantities of sandal-wood, cinnamon oil, ghee and other aromatics. A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 60. See also Mandāram pura puvata, v.624. Sangarāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 46.
3. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 71.

was done to prevent any vicious person from using the ashes for any offensive magic and also perhaps to prevent the ashes from being scattered by the winds until they were collected.

Seven days after the cremation the ashes were scraped together by elderly members of the family and put into an earthen vessel. Perera says that the ashes were collected 'on the following day or a few days after'[1]. According to Davy it was done after seven days. Forbes too states that ashes were collected seven days after the cremation[2]. Sometimes these ashes were put into an earthen vessel and deposited near a Vihāra[3].

The obsequial rites observed in the case of burial were similar to those followed in the case of cremation. There may have been variations, however, depending on such factors as the rank and the worldly circumstances

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1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p.4.

2. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 290; Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 335.

3. In this connexion Davy observes: '...they come back with priests, and having collected the ashes into a little heap, cover them with a pile of stones, a few feet high. Sometimes they remove them in an earthen pot, and deposit them near some Wiharé, or in the family burying-ground.' An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, pp. 290,291; Suckling makes the following observation: 'When bodies are burnt the ashes are collected, put into an earthen vessel and deposited in the ground near a temple.' H.J. Suckling, Ceylon, A General Description of the Island, Vol. I, p. 393.

of the deceased.

There being no common burial grounds[1], the grave was usually dug on a land belonging to the deceased or one of his relatives. Reaching the spot selected for the purpose, one of the nephews of the deceased formally cut the first three clods of earth[2]. The pit dug had to be at least chest-deep. Sometimes a thatched shed was erected above the pit to protect it from weather[3]. After performing the pre-burial rites which were identical to the pre-cremational rites described above[4], the body was placed in the grave with head towards the west. The grave was then filled in. Sometimes the bier on which the corpse was carried to the burial ground was broken and put into the grave[5]. Usually one of the nephews of the deceased threw the first handful of earth into the grave, who was followed by other relatives and friends.

After filling the pit it was customary to stick a green branch into it, and also to place thorns or large

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1. Johann Wolffgang Heydt, Ceylon, p. 140; Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, p. 185.
2. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 76.
3. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.
4. See supra, pp. 364 ff
5. James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p. 400.

stones on the grave to protect it against carrion-eating animals such as the jackal[1].

It was customary for the mourners to undergo purification by bathing before returning home from the funeral place[2]. After the ceremonial bath the washermen provided them with newly washed clothes[3]. Meanwhile,

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1. '....generally they stick a green Branch into the Grave, and round it put sharp Thorns, so that the Corps may be secure from the Jackals.' Von der Behr, Germans in Dutch Ceylon, Vol. I, p. 21. Baldaeus observes: 'The jackals are terribly fond of human flesh, which induces the inhabitants to secure the graves of their dead from their depredations by laying heavy stones over them.' A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon, p. 393.

2. With reference to this custom Paranatella observes: 'As soon as the ceremony is over, all wash their heads (applying limes, either green or boiled), bathe well, and go to their several houses.' T.B. Paranatella, 'Sumptuary Laws and Social Etiquette of the Kandyans', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1908, XXI/61, p. 126; See also K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 72.

3. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p. 77; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p.4. Today the Sinhalese Buddhists wear white as a sign of mourning. This may have been the custom in early times also. It is clear, however, that in Kandyan times black was sometimes considered the mourning colour. Thus prince Senarat is said to have worn black as soon as the news of the death of king Vimaladharmasurya reached him. See Udarata vitti, p. 138. The Mandāram pura puvata says that the bier in which the body of king Vijaya Rājasinha was taken to the funeral place was draped with black flags, and that horses taken in the funeral procession were covered with black cloths. Mandāram pura puvata, v. 617. Describing the funeral customs of the Sinhalese kings Davy states that as soon as it was publicly announced that the king was dead, 'a man stood by the side of a heap of paddy and beat the mourning tom-tom....warning the chiefs to dress themselves in black, and authorizing the people to give

(Continued on the next page)

the house, especially the part of the floor where the deceased had breathed his last, was cleansed by the sprinkling of cowdung diluted in water[1].

It was the custom not to kindle fire in a house of mourning until a few days had passed. The neighbours and friends continued to bring food for the family of the deceased as they had done before, until the second or the third day after the funeral[2].

On the seventh day after death a religious ceremony (pinkama) was held in order to impart merits to the deceased. The essential feature of this ceremony was the alms-giving to the monks in memory of the dead (mataka dāna)[3]. The monks were conducted to the house

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(Footnote 3 continued from previous page)
vent to their grief, and cry and lament aloud.' John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, p. 159.

1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p.4.

2. Paranatella makes the following observation regarding this custom: '...each neighbour brings a covered basket of rice to the mourning house and returns home. Thus there is no need of kindling a fire in the house of mourning for a day or two. Some postpone bringing of rice until the second day, and some even to the third. After this relatives at a distance begin to visit the mourning family day after day with baskets of rice. It is an inviolable custom to pay a visit to such a bereaved household, even if there be slight enmity.' T.B. Paranatella, 'Sumptuary Laws and Social Etiquette of the Kandyans, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), 1908, XXXI/61, p. 126.

3. J.F. Dickson, 'Notes Illustrative of Buddhism as the Daily Religion of the Buddhists of Ceylon', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1884, VIII/29, p. 233.

in procession accompanied by music. After they had been sumptuously fed, the hosts presented them with a number of articles: 'Some days after his decease, if his friends wish well to his Soul, they send for a Priest to the house, who spends a whole night in praying and singing for the saving of that Soul. This Priest besides very good entertainment, in the morning must have great gifts and rewards. And to encourage them therein, he tells them that the like bounty and liberality as they shew to him, shall the Soul of their departed friend receive in the other world. And so according to their ability, they freely give unto him, such things as they are possessors of. And he out of his wonderful good nature refuseth not any thing, be it never so mean. And thus with Drums and Pipes sounding before him, they conduct him home to his house'[1]. The foregoing observation of Knox shows that great care was usually taken to carry out the obligations due to the departed relatives. Knox, however, does not give us an idea of the nature of the gifts presented to the monks in honour of the dead. The Sangarāja sādhu cariyāva bears evidence of the fact that they were usually presented with the aṭa-pirikara or the eight essential requisites of a

1. Robert Knox, An Historical Relation of Ceylon, pp. 184, 185.

monk, namely begging bowl, three kinds of robes, razor, needle, belt and strainer. It was also the general custom to offer several other articles such as white cloths, handkerchiefs, bed-spreads, mats and cups along with these[1]. In this connexion Le Mesurier too states that the monks were presented with 'robes, begging-bowls, cups, handkerchiefs, etc.'[2]. He further says that 'a common offering consisting of a load of vegetables, cakes, an adze, a mamoty, an axe, an arecanut-cutter, a chunam-box and (if the deceased was an old man) a betel pounder', was placed before the monks[3].

It was customary to place a cloth not less than 16 cubits in length on the articles to be presented. One end of it was given to the monks and the relatives of the deceased held on to the other end. Then a monk uttered the following words, the relatives of the deceased repeating them after him: 'These offerings, which have been procured by just means by us and the dead man, we offer to you, the descendants of the great Buddha, in order that we may obtain merit in the name of the deceased'[4].

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1. Saṅgarāja sādhu cariyāva, p. 34.
2. C.J.R. Le Mesurier, 'A Short History of the Principal Religious Ceremonies Observed by the Kandyans of Ceylon', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1881, VII/23, p.41.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Then the cloth was rolled up and placed on the offerings and the monks recited the Pāli verse which begins with the words yatā vārivahā purā[1]. This was followed by a sermon delivered by a monk on a subject agreeable and suited to those present such as the inevitability of death.

As soon as the alms-giving was over a little of the food was put into a small basket (gotuva) and kept on a tree or at a meeting of roads (mansandiya) with a vessel of water and burning lamp by its side. It was believed that the spirit of the departed would accept this offering; and further, in order to induce him to do so, the following Pāli stanza was recited while incense was burnt:

> gandhaṃ dīpañ ca dhūpañ ca
> pāniyaṃ bhojanaṃ pi ca
> patiganhantu santutthā
> ñāti petā idaṃ balim
> May the departed relatives accept this offering consisting of scent, lamps, fragrant smoke, water and food with pleasure[2].

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1. See supra, p.377.

2. C.J.R. Le Mesurier, 'A Short History of the Principal Religious Ceremonies Observed by the Kandyans of Ceylon', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1881, VII/23, p.42; K. Jinananda, Apé sirit virit, p. 72; Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4. See also Kotagama Vachissara, Saranankara Sangharaja Samaya, p. 63.

If a crow or any other bird ate of the offering, the omens were considered to be favourable. But if that did not happen it was taken as a sign which indicated that the dead person had been re-born as a prēta[1]. This custom was not peculiar to the Sinhalese. Dubois thus describes a similar practice found in India: '....and on this again he places the rice and pulse after moulding them in the form of balls. A third libation is then offered, mantrams are recited, and the balls are thrown to the crows, which, as every one knows, are very common in India. The Hindus believe these noisy and rapacious birds to be evil spirits, in fact, devils under the form of crows. This offering, therefore, is intended to render them kindly disposed towards the dead man. If they refuse to accept the food, which we are told sometimes happens, it is a very bad omen for him, and instead of being admitted into the Abode of Bliss he will find himself, despite all the mantrams and purifying ceremonies, made captive in the Yama-loka, that is to say, in hell.'[2] Judging from the similarity of this belief with that which prevailed in Ceylon, we

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1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4.

2. Abbe J.A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, p. 487; See also E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes of South India, Vol. I, p. 299.

may infer that some of the early Indian practices connected with the spirits of the departed were incorporated into the popular Buddhistic rituals of the Sinhalese. It may be that Pāli verses were substituted for the Indian mantras while this fusion was taking place.

Three months after death, another ceremony was held for the purpose of imparting merits to the deceased[1]. Monks were again invited for alms and presented with various gifts as was done at the previous ceremony. Generally proceedings followed the same course as that already recounted.

Even after this, however, the Sinhalese could not forget their dead altogether, especially if the deceased was suspected to have been re-born as a prēta. If the near relatives were tormented by dreams of the dead, or if they were obsessed with the fear that the spirits of the departed had begun to inflict injury upon them in the form of sickness and other calamities[2], further ceremonies were considered to be necessary to restore him to good humour. In such cases, religious as well as magical rites were used to remove the spirit's anger. The Malaprēta yādinna states that prētas could be brought under control by reciting gātās as well as mantras (kāpa kota gātā

1. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p.4.

2. See Malaprēta kannalavva, vv. 10-13; Malaprēta yādinna, vv. 25, 38.

mantra kiyālā)[1]. Gātā is usually understood to refer to stanzas written in Pāli. And there is no doubt that the Malapreta yādinna here uses the word gātā to denote pirit (Pāli paritta), for pirit was often recited by monks to drive away evil spirits[2]. The Dīgha-nikāyatthakathā recommends the chanting of the Metta, Dhajagga and Ratana suttas for that purpose. If that did not produce the expected results the Ātānātiya sutta is to be recited[3].

Similarly it seems clear that the Malapreta yādinna uses the word mantra to mean incantations chanted at ceremonies held to propitiate evil spirits[4]. As has already been mentioned spirits of the departed were not considered very difficult to please[5]. And they were less feared than the demons or gods. Moreover they were not regarded as necessarily malevolent. On the contrary, they were sometimes supposed to take an interest in their descendants' material well being. But if neglected they were believed to show their

1. Malapreta yādinna, v. 28.
2. See G.P. Malalasekera, The Pāli Literature of Ceylon, pp. 75, 76.
3. Dīgha nikāyatthakathā, p. 707.
4. For a discussion of these ceremonies see supra pp. 284 ff.
5. See supra, p. 306.

displeasure by withdrawing the help or even becoming aggressive[1]. This belief was often so firmly held that the Sinhalese went to great lengths to pacify the spirits of the departed. What the pretas needed most was merits. And at the end of any religious ceremony they transferred a share of the merits thus acquired to them. The fact that this practice is sometimes mentioned in Sinhalese inscriptions makes it clear that this was the position in Ceylon even in early times[2].

Dickson states that on the day an alms-giving was held in memory of the dead, the monks read 'a Sinhalese book called the Preta-kathāvastu-pota'[3]. There is no doubt that the book referred to here is the Sinhalese translation of Pāli Petavatthu which deals with the spirits of the dead. The monks chose to read this particular book probably because it made the survivors understand the necessity of imparting merits to the dead. The Petavatthu, in fact, appears to have been a topic often selected for after-dāna sermons even in early times.

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1. See Malapreta kannalavva, vv. 14, 15.

2. For example, transference of merits to the dead is referred to in the slab-inscription of queen Kalyāṇavatī. See Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. IV, p.260.

3. J.F. Dickson, 'Notes Illustrative of Buddhism as the Daily Religion of the Buddhists of Ceylon, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1884, VIII/29, p. 234.

The Mahāvamsa says that it was preached by Mahinda after partaking of a dāna held by king Dēvānampiya Tissa[1].

In addition to the alms-giving to the monks described above it was also the custom to hold a feast a few weeks after a death, to which many people of the village were invited. With reference to this feast Selkirk observes: 'It is the custom althrough the country to have a feast a few weeks after a person has died. The head person in the house invites nearly all the people of the village to his house, and after having well eaten and drunk at his expence, they go to their homes. It would be considered a disgrace, and as showing disrespect to the memory of the dead, were this feast to be omitted; and therefore many poor people would rather run into debt than pass it over.'[2] This feast was sometimes called mataka bata kāma, 'the eating of rice in memory (of the dead)'[3]. According to Perera all signs of sorrow were banished from the day this feast was held[4]. Most of the post-funeral

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1. Mahāvamsa, p. 95.

2. James Selkirk, Recollections of Ceylon, p. 414.

3. K. Jinananda, Apē sirit virit, p.

4. Arthur A. Perera, Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life, p. 4; Forbes observes that 'in many cases, the mourning, except the dress of dark blue, may be said to cease with the termination of the ceremonies.' Major Forbes, Eleven Years in Ceylon, Vol. I., p. 335.

ceremonies described above have persisted up to the present day. However, the custom of holding a feast 'a few weeks after a person has died' is practically non-existent.

Conclusion

From early times Ceylon had been in close contact with the Indian subcontinent. Hence it is not surprising that many of the customs and institutions described in the preceding chapters show a striking resemblance to those found amongst various castes and tribes of India. For instance caste system was a feature of social life which the Sinhalese had in common with the Hindus. Similarly, the Sinhalese ceremonies which surrounded events such as birth, name-giving, marriage and death closely resemble some of the saṃskāra rites of the Hindus. Education, medicine and magical practices also show a number of close similarities.

It is necessary to stress, however, that most of the cultural traits which the Sinhalese received from India were often fashioned to fit in with their way of life and thinking. For instance, although caste was the basis of Sinhalese social structure, it always remained a secular institution amongst the Sinhalese. In sharp contrast, amongst the Hindus caste was rooted in religion.

Similarly, some of the Sinhalese marriage customs differed from those of the Hindus very conspicuously. For instance, while pre-puberty marriage was

favoured by the Hindus the Sinhalese girls normally married after they had attained puberty. Marriage among the Sinhalese was secular and contractual. In contrast, the Hindu marriage was a sacrament. Since the Sinhalese marriage bore only a contractual character it was never considered to be an indissoluble bond. Hence divorce was easy and common amongst the Sinhalese. And no stigma was attached to divorced parties. Quite the opposite was the case amongst the Hindus. Since their marriage was a sacrament they had an aversion to divorce as a mean of solving marital difficulties. Further, remarriage of widows was not permitted amongst them. In fact, the widow was often considered inauspicious and was discouraged from taking an active part in ceremonial activities. Amongst the Sinhalese there was no traditional ban on remarriage of widows. The widow was free to decide herself whether to marry again.

Religion has wielded a great influence over many aspects of Sinhalese culture. The influence of Buddhism on Sinhalese literature, sculpture, painting and other arts is unmistakable and obvious. Even in some of the incantations recited at ceremonies held to propitiate offended supernatural beings, the name of the Buddha is often mentioned. In fact, there is a separate class of incantations based solely on the superior

qualities of the Buddha. Further, suttas such as Ratana and Āṭānāṭiya were recited to drive away evil spirits. The Angulimāla pirita was recited by laymen to bring relief to expectant mothers who were in prolonged labour. Such was the faith the Sinhalese had in religion. Hence at first sight it seems paradoxical that no religious functionary was called in to officiate at many of the Sinhalese ceremonies connected with crises of life. It was only in the crisis of death that the Buddhist monks had a part to play. However, there is no difficulty in understanding this phenomenon. Although it was considered to be the duty of the Saṅgha to help the laity in spiritual matters, to participate in secular affairs was generally thought to be against the spirit of the teaching of the Buddha. Hence the only domestic ceremony in which the Buddhist monks were able to play any part, was the ceremony which surrounded the great crisis of death. Here too, their role was limited to the task of performing the religious rites for the purpose of imparting merit to the deceased.

Here it must be pointed out that amongst the high-caste Hindus it was customary to call in a brāhmaṇa to officiate at the ceremonies connected with the major crises of life. As is well known, the brāhmaṇas who occupied the topmost place in the Indian caste hierarchy

were traditionally associated with priestly duties. In sharp contrast, the govi caste which was at the top of the Sinhalese caste hierarchy had no such ritualistic functions to perform. Curiously enough, these functions were assigned to some castes which occupied a low position in the social scale. For instance, a woman of the washer caste was called in to officiate at the puberty ceremony of girls. In the case of boys, the ceremony of shaving of the beard had to be performed, and it was the barber who officiated at it. At marriage, the washerman rendered some services; but the ritual of tying together of the fingers of bride and bridegroom, which was the essential part of the marriage ceremony, was usually performed by the bride's uncle. The fact that the services of some of the low castes were in demand on many domestic ceremonial occasions considerably increased their importance in the society. The Sinhalese social system enjoined cooperation between the different castes in the spheres of social and economic activities. This had to be so, for no castewas self-sufficient.

The fact that the Sinhalese culture was greatly enriched by the assimilation of Indian elements suggests that it was receptive to innovations. On the other hand, the fact that it differs from the Hindu culture in certain respects indicates that it was always selective

in its response to innovations.

Like any other society, Sinhalese society has never remained completely static. In the course of the past century or so, Sinhalese society has been subjected to many western-inspired innovations. Nevertheless, tradition still has a strong hold on the Sinhalese. For instance, although the caste system is commonly supposed to be in the process of declining, opposition to inter-caste marriage has not relaxed. However, the concept of pollution in inter-caste relations has definitely declined. Similarly, the abject respect shown in Kandyan times by those of the lower rungs of the social ladder before the higher is no longer displayed. Indeed ideas of equality have come into prominence with the flux of time. But the caste system is still in operation.

The traditional kinship pattern persists even at present. A marital union between two parallel cousins is considered reprehensible as it had been in Kandyan times also. But the institution of cross-cousin marriage, which was very popular during the Kandyan period, is practically non-existent.

Most of the old Sinhalese customs and institutions once had a definite function and significance. With the passage of time, however, some of them begun to appear as meaningless. For instance, the custom of

polyandry throve in Kandyan times mainly because it was capable of fulfilling a variety of purposes. But it has no such purpose to fulfil in the modern society. Hence polyandry has now become obsolete.

The traditional concept of respect of the young towards elders still has a place in the society. Nevertheless, there is a shift to the attitude of giving the children more liberty in the choice of marriage partners. In the rural areas the parental interference still plays a significant part in limiting the choice of mates. Those who consider mutual attraction the most essential condition of marriage normally do not take into consideration the potential partner's caste. But in the case of arranged marriages it is the most important criterion taken into account. The Sinhalese marriage ceremony of today is not elaborate. However, some still display a keen concern in the performance of the main rituals such as the tying together of the fingers of the bride and bridegroom, pouring of water over the clasped hands of the bridal pair and the exchanging of food.

It is clearly seen how some of the old customs which are not in keeping with modern life have begun to disappear. For example, the opening of hospitals and the availability of quick and efficient medical

treatment have greatly changed the attitude of the ordinary people towards diseases and their treatment. It is true that some still believe in the use of charms, incantations and offerings in conjunction with medicine. But the importance of magic ritual has declined, even in the remote parts of the island, under the impact of new socio-economic factors.

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